

RIVER LEGENDS

OR

FATHER THAMES AND FATHER RHINE

BY THE RIGHT HON.

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY GUSTAVE DORÉ



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LIST OF ENGRAVINGS.

FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS.

HANS AND HIS PRISONER	<i>Frontispiece</i>
THE BARON'S OATH	<i>To face page</i> 107
THE FATHER OF ALL GIANTS	140
POWLE'S ADVANCE ON THE CASTLE	242

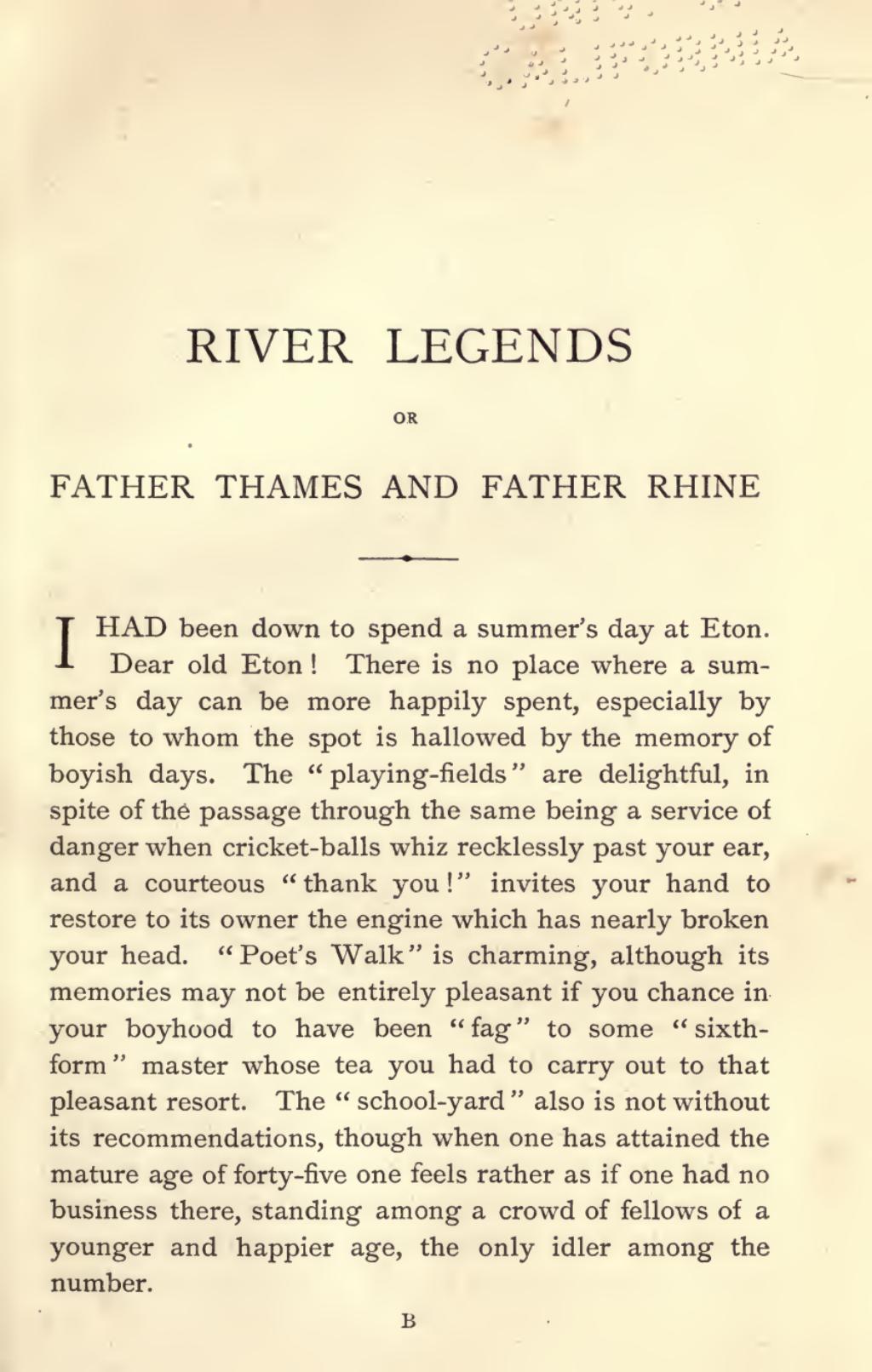
TEXT ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
FATHER THAMES AND FATHER RHINE	3
THE MESSENGER	5
FATHER THAMES AFTER HIS ALE	6
THE BOAR	8
THE BOAR'S FAMILY	10
THE INFANT SMITH	13
THE SACRIFICE OF SMITH'S FATHER	15
SMITH IN TOAD-LAND	18
THE SNAKES	22
BERTHA THE DRUIDESS	27
THE ROAD INTO THE FOREST	35
THE LAST OF THE BOAR	46
THE BARONESS AND HER BACK HAIR	56
FATHER RHINE AND HIS ELVES	59

284724

	PAGE
THE RIVER-DEMON THIEF	64
THE GREEDY CHILD	67
THE DEVILET	72
MARTHA ROUSING THE PEASANTS	78
FATHER RHINE AND THE THREE BARONNESSES	81
THE SWAN-SISTERS	84
CRAZY TIMOTHY	92
THE OLD HARPER	97
SHE KEEPS THE PIGS	115
SHE WATCHES THE BATTLE	132
GIANTS MOUNTAIN-BUILDING	143
BRAMBLE-BUFFER STORM-MAKING	148
HE UPROOTS THE TREE	153
HANS SENT ALOFT	163
HANS IN THE GIANT'S MOUTH	166
THE MOUTH FORTIFIED	167
THE GIANT WEEPS	170
THE GIANT'S RELEASE	173
THE CASTLE	181
MANNIKINS AT PLAY	187
GOODY TICKLEBACK'S STEED	188
FLIGHT OF THE WITCHES	202
THE SEA-SERPENT	225
FATHER RHINE'S RETREAT	252





RIVER LEGENDS

OR

FATHER THAMES AND FATHER RHINE

I HAD been down to spend a summer's day at Eton. Dear old Eton ! There is no place where a summer's day can be more happily spent, especially by those to whom the spot is hallowed by the memory of boyish days. The "playing-fields" are delightful, in spite of the passage through the same being a service of danger when cricket-balls whiz recklessly past your ear, and a courteous "thank you !" invites your hand to restore to its owner the engine which has nearly broken your head. "Poet's Walk" is charming, although its memories may not be entirely pleasant if you chance in your boyhood to have been "fag" to some "sixth-form" master whose tea you had to carry out to that pleasant resort. The "school-yard" also is not without its recommendations, though when one has attained the mature age of forty-five one feels rather as if one had no business there, standing among a crowd of fellows of a younger and happier age, the only idler among the number.

On the particular day of which I speak, I had rambled about with those boys I knew, gathered as much pleasure as I could from the memories which clung around the precincts of the old college, and afterwards strolled out along the banks of the river in the direction of Surly. The weather being rather hot, although evening was approaching, I thought it well to halt in the immediate neighbourhood of Surly Hall, and having seated myself in the shadiest place I could find, began to think over the various "Fourths of June" and "Election Saturdays" which I had witnessed in that famous locality, until I not unnaturally fell fast asleep. I do not know how long I remained in this comfortable state, but I was suddenly aroused by the sound of voices, and immediately opened my eyes and looked around to discover the quarter from which they proceeded. It was not long before I was enlightened upon this point.

Nearly opposite the spot upon which I had seated myself was a little island in the very middle of the river, dividing the water which flowed on each side of it and left it high and dry. This island was of no great size, and, I should imagine, of no great value either, being covered with reeds and willows, and apparently fit for nothing except to afford shelter to moor-hens and water-rats, which creatures probably found it an exceedingly convenient habitation. Upon the present occasion, however, beings of a different nature altogether appeared to have taken possession of the island. At a plain deal table were seated two ancient individuals of kingly and majestic mien. He who sat at the end of the table wore a white beard of mighty size, which streamed downward to his waist; whilst his companion,

who sat at his right hand, and was of a dark and swarthy complexion, boasted but little beard, but made up for the deficiency by the size and length of the black appendages which adorned his upper lip. Each of these two kings (for such the crowns upon their heads betokened them to be, and the regal dignity of their general appearance gave further proof of their condition) grasped in his hand a tumbler which was apparently full of liquor more potent than the water which



Father Thames and Father Rhine.

flowed around them, whilst a huge pewter pot (which constituted the only other furniture of their table) bore witness to the quarter from whence their potations had been supplied.

As I regarded these two strange beings with an astonishment not altogether unmixed with reverential awe (for I saw at once that they were more than ordinary mortals), he at the end of the table broke silence, and striking his fist upon the board in an emphatic manner, thus addressed his companion : “ Brother

Rhine!" said he, "welcome to old England. Thames gives thee hearty welcome." The other gravely bowed his head in acknowledgment of this cordial speech, but uttered no word in reply, and methought I perceived upon his royal countenance some signs such as appear upon the face of a passenger between Dover and Calais whom the ocean has rudely shaken. Father Thames (for as such I instinctively recognised the first speaker) appeared to make a somewhat similar observation, for he forthwith addressed his friend a second time in these words: "What aileth thee, Brother Rhine? Lovest thou not this change of climate, or dost thou fear that thy waters will overflow or thy tributary streams rebel during thy brief absence?"

He who was thus accosted smiled grimly, and stroked his dark moustache as he made answer: "Neither the one nor the other, Brother Thames. It is but thine English ale which is somewhat more potent than my native drink. But, craving thy pardon, the matter will soon be set right. A trusty messenger should by this time be arriving with a supply of mine own Rhine wine, and I would fain have thee try the vintage."

The countenance of Father Thames visibly darkened. "I forsake not mine ale," said he gloomily. "It gladdens the heart and strengthens the frame more than the juice of grape."

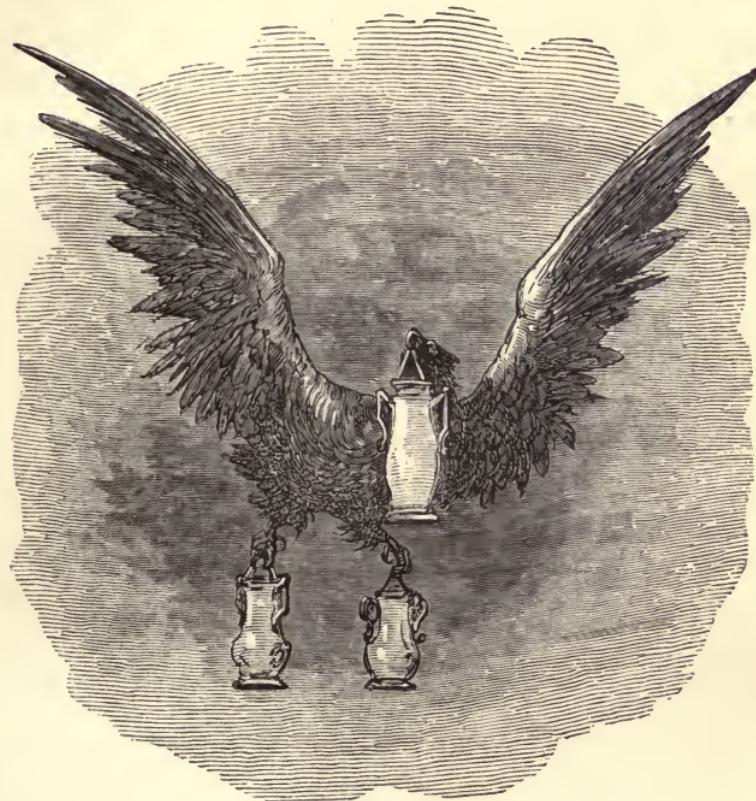
"And yet," replied the other, "there are merry hearts, strong frames, and brave spirits in plenty upon my banks; and thus it has ever been, as many an old legend can well bear witness."

"Doubtless," responded Father Thames, though still somewhat moodily. "But yet for legends and stories

of the olden time my river lacketh not a good supply;
nor are British hearts less merry or British spirits less
brave than those of whom thou makest thy boast."

"I doubt it not, I doubt it not," rejoined the monarch
of the Rhine. "But see, here comes my messenger!"

As he spoke, I looked up and beheld an enormous



The Messenger.

eagle, carrying a huge silver flagon in his beak and another in each of his claws, and hovering immediately over the heads of the two kings. Presently he alighted, deposited his precious burdens upon the table directly in front of the Rhine king, and obediently waited for

orders behind his master. The latter lost no time in hesitation over his course of procedure. Taking up the vessel from which he had recently drank, he dipped it several times in the running water at his feet until all traces of the ale had disappeared, then, filling it full with sparkling wine from one of the flagons before him, he looked steadily at his companion, gravely inclined his head towards him, and then tossed off his liquor

with an air of supreme satisfaction, and replaced his tumbler upon the table.

Father Thames meanwhile had not been idle. Whilst his brother king was thus engaged, he had drawn the pewter pot nearer to himself and replenished his tumbler with foaming ale. "Your health, Brother Rhine," he shouted in a stentorian voice, and winking one eye in a peculiar but not unpleasant manner, he drained his glass to the dregs. A change at

once appeared to come over his countenance—it positively sparkled with fun; a species of light appeared to play around his head as if the rays of the sun had come to give a parting radiance to his crown before they retired for the night. His whole face beamed with internal and intense satisfaction, and once more striking his hand on the table, he spoke thus: "Brother Rhine, we have each his own liquor and each his own river.



Father Thames after his Ale.

Let each enjoy his own ! Live and let live. But whilst we sit here so happily, let us while away the time by recounting some of the legends for which our banks are so famous, and of which we each have a good store."

"Agreed!" cried he of the Rhine; "and as thou hast proposed the pastime, Brother Thames, do thou begin."

Thus adjured, Father Thames, having previously filled and emptied his tumbler once more, cleared his throat and commenced the history of—

The Great Boar of Windsor Forest.

I need scarcely tell you that England was not always what it is to-day, and that the advance of time has wrought very considerable changes in the scenery of the country through which the waters of the Thames hold their course. The river which bears my name now washes fertile shores which were once barren plains, and pleasant towns and smiling meadows have replaced wild thickets and dense forests. I suppose there never was a more delightful forest than that of which Windsor can boast. When mortals speak of Windsor Forest, they generally associate therewith the name of Herne the Hunter, who was quite a character in his way, had an oak of his own, and has had more than one very readable story written about him. But Herne the Hunter is quite a modern hero compared with those of whom I am about to tell you. I speak of old, very old days, and if I do not give you the exact date when the events occurred which I shall presently relate, it is only because I haven't the least idea what

that date may have been. But, be it what you will, it is an undoubted fact that long, long ago there was a forest which stretched down to the very edge of my river near



The Boar.

to this particular spot, and this forest was the abode of many strange and incomprehensible beings. Perhaps the most curious and most disagreeable of these in the days I speak of was a personage familiarly termed the

Wild Boar of Windsor. This creature was of enormous size and strength, and was generally acknowledged as the king of his tribe.

Wild boars were at that time numerous in England, and I believe, if the truth were known, that fairies and Fairyland power had much to do with their existence. That power has passed away now, or at least has so greatly diminished that, although there are plenty of persons left who may be correctly described by a word which sounds exactly like the name of the animal in question, yet the fairies have nothing to do with this. Magic power no longer converts the objects of its wrath into brute beasts or hideous monsters, as was frequently the case in the good old times of which I speak. Whether the Wild Boar in question was the victim of some such vengeance, or whether he had always been what he appeared in those days, it is not necessary to inquire. Anyhow, he was certainly more than mortal. He had apparently the gift of prophecy, for his grunts were often repeated by his subservient followers as having foretold subsequent events with singular accuracy, and he was not unfrequently sought out by persons who desired to be acquainted beforehand with future events, which has in all ages been a foolish weakness to which human nature has been subject.

This Boar had a numerous family, who were daily fed out of silver dishes, sitting all in a row and eating with as much decorum as could be expected. It is not, however, of his family or domestic life that I am about to tell you to-day, but of the extraordinary events which occurred in connection with the efforts made by mankind to rid themselves of this exceedingly troublesome

creature. For although, as I have already said, the ignorant peasants of the neighbourhood held the Boar in great reverence, and used to creep timidly into the forest in search of the knowledge which he was said to possess, and which *they* certainly lacked, there were others who regarded the kingly Boar as an unmitigated nuisance. This was scarcely wonderful, since he and his tribe had the most unpleasant habit of issuing forth



The Boar's Family.

from the forest, and devastating the country far and wide, making everybody as uncomfortable as possible.

Ever since I have known this country, which is now a good many years ago, the people who inhabit it have liked to be as comfortable as they could be, especially when living quietly in their own homes, intrusion into which they have always greatly resented. "An Englishman's house is his castle" is a very old proverb amongst them, and they have a strong attachment to the particular localities in which they have been born and bred. So that when this Boar ravaged right and

left, respected no man's castle, uprooted everybody's crops, and made himself generally disagreeable, it was quite natural that the worthy people who suffered from his depredations should feel exceedingly annoyed. After a while, this annoyance took the form of an earnest desire to get rid of the monster. The question, however, of the means to be employed to accomplish this desirable result was by no means easy of solution. To dig pits, such as were in those days commonly used for the destruction of wild animals, would have been an utterly useless proceeding when employed against a creature of such supernatural sagacity. Guns had not been invented; no dog could be found strong and fierce enough to attack the monster; and the more the poor people thought of the matter the more hopeless did their case appear. Law and order were not then what they are now, and there existed no county constabulary to whom, in the present day, the business would at once be referred with a perfect certainty that the wrong-doer would be forthwith arrested and punished. Nor had the pious founder of Eton College as yet existed, or doubtless aid would have been sought by the sufferers from the provost and fellows of that famous abode of learning. Their prayers at least would have been invoked, for these saintly men have always been persons of great age, profound wisdom, and extreme piety, and the only doubt might have been lest, as the Boar had been so long in existence, they might not have considered him as one of the institutions of their country, and declined to take any steps against him in consequence. But, as they themselves did not then exist, the question did not arise, and the Boar continued supreme.

For aught I know, he might have continued so down to this day but for the circumstances which I am about to relate.

A poor woman of the neighbourhood dreamed that she was about to become the mother of the largest family that the world had ever seen. This being a thing which her husband, being in straitened circumstances, deemed by no means desirable, he received the news with disgust only tempered by disbelief, and treated his helpmate to language of a rough and discourteous character. His frame of mind changed, however, when, as years rolled on, one child only claimed him for its father, which of course entitled him to sneer at his wife and her dreams as a good husband would naturally do under such circumstances. The child, however, was one of no ordinary description. Not only was he the largest and most strongly made child ever seen in these parts, but he showed from an early age a singular and precocious intelligence. Before the time when infants are supposed to be able to convey their meaning to their friends by intelligible utterances, a very remarkable instance of this precocity occurred. The father and mother (whose names have not been handed down to posterity) were discussing the future of their promising babe in his presence, and one asked of the other the question what distinguishing name should be given to so fine a child. The astonishment of the parents may be imagined when the infant, suddenly sitting upright in his mother's lap, and steadfastly regarding his father, winked his left eye violently, laid the first finger of his right hand against his little nose in a confidential manner, and emphatically pronounced the word "Smith."

Whether this proceeding was, by the powers of magic, ordered and decreed with a view to the fulfilment of the dream of the child's mother, is a question upon which (like most others) various opinions may be entertained. Certain, however, it is that the result justifies the idea, inasmuch as the astonished parents obeyed the commands of their offspring, and gave him that name which has since been borne by so many of the inhabitants of



The Infant Smith.

this island, and of which (despite all other accounts bearing the stamp of probability) this child was the inventor and founder.

As the babe grew older, his wondrous strength was the subject of general remark. His favourite plaything was a club, much thicker at one end than the other, and nearly as tall as himself. This he would brandish about over his head to the imminent danger of the by-

standers, or would lovingly encircle with his arm, leaning his head against it, as he sat upon the ground pondering over some plans only known to himself with a more than childish gravity.

These, you must know, were the days of the worthy Druids, who guided the religious feelings of the country, and, as has been occasionally the fashion of ecclesiastics in all ages, used the ignorance and superstition of the people to establish their own authority. Take them all in all, I don't know that they were worse than other priests whom I have seen upon my banks in later ages; but they had an awkward habit of occasionally discovering that their personal enemies were required by the gods as a sacrifice, and thus not unfrequently managed to propitiate their own vengeance and that of the irate deities at one and the same moment. Smith's father, having been unlucky enough to fall under the ban of one of these respectable gentlemen, was sacrificed one fine morning, in spite of all his protestations; and, his mother having died previously, the child was left an orphan, poor and desolate. Under these circumstances you will wonder what became of him.

There were no poor-laws, and consequently no work-houses, in those days. "Relieving officers" were unknown, and even parish beadle had not come into being. Indeed, if this had been the case, I should have no legend to relate to you upon my present theme. Smith would have lived a different life altogether. He would very likely have been the interesting subject of discussion between several parishes, each laudably anxious to escape being called upon to pay for his nurture and education, who would possibly have spent

in the contest more than would have fed and educated twenty Smiths. Eventually he would have been con-



The Sacrifice of Smith's Father.

signed to the workhouse school until he had arrived at an age when he might possibly have been able to learn

something, at which moment this would very properly have been prevented by his being transferred to the enlivening employment of rook-keeping, from which he would have gradually risen to the position of a day-labourer upon some neighbouring farm, unless he had evinced sufficient intellectual ability to have aspired to the rank and dignity of "waggoner's mate." This brilliant career, however, was not open to our hero in the benighted days of which I speak. This being so, he not unnaturally did something else. He disappeared from the eyes of the world in a manner which would have been perfectly marvellous if there had been anybody who cared to marvel at it. This, however, was not the case.

The venerable Druid who had sacrificed the child's father took no trouble about the child, though he would probably have sacrificed him too with the greatest pleasure had any hint been given him upon the subject. The people who had permitted and sanctioned the deed never gave a thought to the infant who had thereby been left destitute. Public opinion was not in existence, and as this island had not then, as it has now, what is popularly called "the blessing of a Free Press," the attention of the neighbourhood was not called to such trifling occurrences. So Smith's father perished and Smith disappeared, without notice or remark from anybody. What really happened to the lad is known, of course, to me, and is sufficiently laughable. He wandered into the forest, and became the friend and companion of the toads, for which Windsor has always been famous.

Now, although mortals are not generally aware of the fact, it is well known, brother, to you and me, that

toads are among the wisest and most intelligent of animals. They may be called ugly by those who only judge of character and worth by the standard of that beauty which is after all but skin-deep; they may be termed slimy and unpleasant by those who cannot see below the surface; they may even be deemed stupid by people who are unable to discern the intellectual vigour which shines forth in the extraordinary brightness of the eye of a well-bred toad. But, as *we* know full well, a toad is one of the most powerful of created beings in his knowledge of magic and of hidden art. How many are the buried treasures over which a toad sits as guardian, laughing to himself at the busy mortals above who would give their eyes and ears to possess that which is really within their reach if they did but know it! And, apart from this peculiar point of view, how happy the life of a well-regulated toad!—how simple his tastes, how free from care his heart, how tranquil his existence, so long as he is permitted to enjoy it without being stamped upon by the cruel heel of mortal, or swallowed by the voracious mouth of snake. With the toads of the forest, then, Smith made his home; and often did I see him in those old days, sporting with his strange playmates among the roots of the gigantic trees which grew down to my very water's edge, sometimes playing leap-frog, at other moments hopping races, and not unfrequently reclining by the side of one of the worthy toads, his arm thrown around it, and its body serving as a resting-place for his infant head and shoulders.

From these strange instructors did little Smith receive an education which fitted him for the career

which he had chalked out for himself. From them he learned more than ordinary mortals could have taught him ; and meanwhile the wholesome and quiet life which he led in the forest caused him to increase daily in bodily strength, so that he bid fair to rival Hercules before he arrived at manhood. All this time the Boar



Smith in Toad-land.

continued to pursue his ravages unchecked and unmolested, and had become more than ever the terror of the surrounding country. In vain did the Druids denounce him : the more they cursed the more he seemed to prosper, and the whole framework of society was shaken by this terrible animal. The effect, more-

over, throughout the whole island, was the reverse of agreeable.

We have noticed, in the struggles of mankind for supremacy, that when one particular nation has obtained, whether by good fortune or good organization, great military successes, it sometimes happens that the citizens of that nation become puffed up and insolent beyond measure, considering that the mere fact of belonging to that victorious country stamps a man (however intellectually poor or morally imbecile) as something superior to his fellow-creatures, and gives him a right to be as rude and disagreeable as he pleases. Such was at this time the precise result of the Boar's undiminished power. Every pig in the island thought himself far superior to any other animal. The insolence of Pigdom became rapidly intolerable; these unpleasant animals thrust their snouts into everybody else's dish, and England was threatened with a porcine yoke which would inevitably have interfered with that great future which she was destined to achieve in after-years. However, England has never been without her Smith in the hour of danger, and this, the first individual of that illustrious name, set the example which his descendants have so often followed.

Having formed the noble determination to free his country or perish in the attempt, he next determined to avoid the latter alternative if he possibly could. The manner in which he should proceed required, indeed, his most careful consideration. Instructed as he had been in magic arts by the excellent toads, he knew full well that he had to cope with an adversary who was said to be able to fight with the same weapons. Cau-

tion, therefore, as well as skill, was certainly necessary, and his first object was to discover the extent of the enemy's power, and whether there existed any means by which it could be lessened. To do this, however, it was necessary to employ some spy to obtain intelligence upon which reliance might be placed.

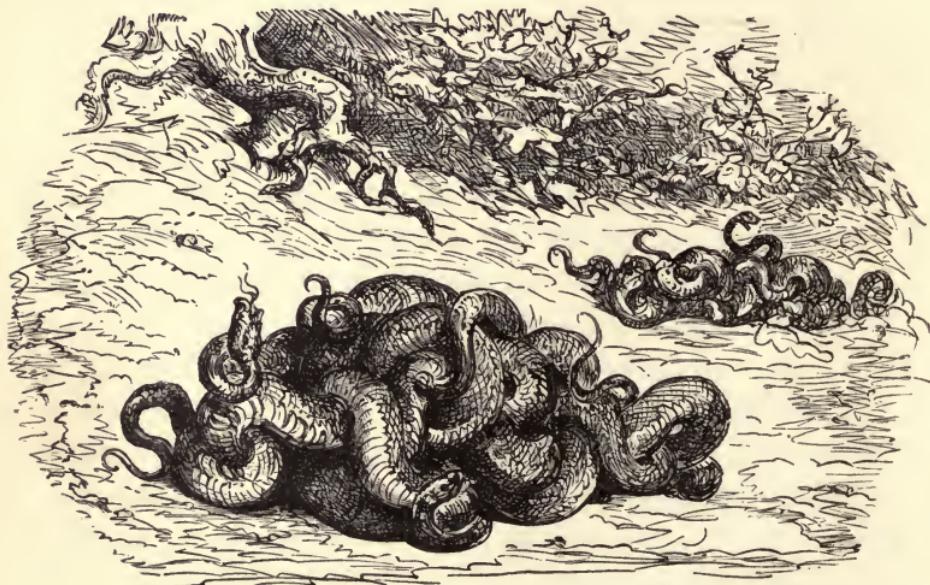
No mortal had ever dared to penetrate the lair of the great Boar; and those who wished to hear him grunt had never ventured to do more than creep, with stealthy step and timorous aspect, on the outer verge of the great thicket which he had been seen to enter after his marauding excursions. Nor, indeed, was it easy to find any four-footed animal who would undertake the task. The wolves and foxes, of which there were a very great number in Windsor Forest, respectfully but firmly declined; the hares and rabbits squeaked and ran away at the very idea; and the stoats and weasels declared that it was no business of theirs, and they could not interfere in such matters. Then there were the birds; but these simple creatures have always had a horror of magic and witchcraft, and there was nothing to be done with *them*. The tender wood-pigeons coo'd out their reluctance to dabble with anything which was not pure and holy and loving; the robin pretended not to hear, and sang his morning hymn with a provoking vehemence whilst Smith was accosting him; the owl shook her head gravely and gave vent to a low hoot of determined refusal; while the gaudy jays flew away laughing and shrieking in a most impertinent manner, which left no hope of their compliance.

Thus baffled in his first attempt, Smith once more consulted the toads, and asked the oldest and wisest of

them for his advice, which was promptly given. "The Foul Swine," said he, "is not the great magician which he pretends. His tusks are long and his years many, but there are those within and without the forest more powerful than he. Your task is certainly one of some difficulty. Nevertheless, there is an ancient proverb well known among us toads which will be of great use to you, and which we are bound never to repeat to mortal ear save under certain conditions. The first of these is, that the mortal to whom we may repeat it must have passed at least half his life with our own people, and have learned to speak the toad language like a native. As you have now passed considerably more than the prescribed period among us, and (except perhaps as regards spitting) are in all respects a regular toad, this first condition has evidently been fulfilled in your case. The second condition requires that the person to whom the proverb shall be imparted must have rendered service to the toad people by killing at least twenty of our natural enemies, the snakes. This service you have yet to perform. The third condition simply stipulates that the individual in question shall bind himself by the most solemn oath known to toads—namely, by the eyes of the two golden toads which sit day and night at the foot of the throne of the Emperor of China—that he will set himself strenuously to perform the task to which the proverb alludes. About this you will probably find no difficulty, and therefore it is really only with the second condition that you need trouble yourself at all."

Smith listened with great attention to the remarks made by his ancient friend, and lost no time in qualify-

ing himself to be the recipient of the desired information by destroying the requisite number of snakes. That very evening his art as a snake-charmer was so successfully practised, that more than fifty of the creatures lay twisting and writhing in front of the toads' favourite trees, and were presently dispatched by vigorous blows from the stalwart arm of Smith. This feat having been per-



The Snakes.

formed, he requested the venerable toad to impart the proverb upon which so much might depend. The worthy old gentleman was nothing loath, and, having given an exulting croak over the bodies of his slain foemen, spat twice in the air for joy, and proceeded to administer the toad-oath, which pledged Smith to strive his utmost to perform some task as yet unknown. Great, however, was his delight at finding that this task

was none other than the very one to which he had already determined to devote his life, namely, the destruction of the Great Boar. And thus ran the proverb :—

“ Blood of slayer and of slain
Must together blended be
Ere the Boar’s detested reign
Cease, and Windsor shall be free.”

These words having been pronounced by the toad with due solemnity, he again went through the apparently unnecessary, not to say unpleasant, process of spitting twice, after which he quietly subsided, and crept under a large root, with a view to a long nap, which might last for a day, a year, or a century, as the humour took him.

Smith now set himself seriously to consider what should be done, and what was the exact meaning of the proverb. It was his earnest wish that the “detested reign” of the Boar should cease as soon as possible, but what the blending together of the blood of the slayer and the slain could possibly mean was an exceedingly hard puzzle, and one which he knew not how to unravel. As, however, he was bound to do his best to perform the task to the accomplishment of which he had pledged himself, he determined to sally forth from the forest and endeavour to seek the aid which the birds and beasts within it were unable to afford him. Accordingly, he marched back into society, which, if not precisely civilised, was somewhat different from that of the toads and other creatures who had for the best part of his life been his only companions. Had he lived some years later, there can be little doubt that his reappearance

would have created considerable surprise, and his costume would have been in singular contrast with that of ordinary men. As, however, at that period of the island's history, men wore very little costume at all beyond that which nature had bestowed upon them, this was no difficulty in the way of our hero's return. Moreover, the education given him by the toads had been so vastly superior to that which he would have received at the hands of his fellow-men, that there was nothing strange, uncouth, or remarkable either in his speech or manners, which, in fact, contrasted favourably with those of the human beings whom he was likely to meet.

In those days the villages were small and the dwellings comparatively few and far between. The country upon the borders of the forest presented a barren and miserable appearance, mainly in consequence of the extreme poverty of its inhabitants, who were deterred from the agricultural pursuits which they would otherwise have followed by the constant ravages of the cruel Boar. It was, therefore, a rare thing to see many people in that part of the country, and Smith, had he known it, would have been surprised at the number he saw as he strode forward on his way. As, however, he had been so long in the forest as to have forgotten the usual habits of the peasantry outside, he was not astonished at all, and saw without wonder that people were hurrying along in the same direction as himself from every quarter. It struck him as rather strange that they should all be going the same way, and, being desirous of knowing the reason why, he took the not unnatural course of asking a peasant woman whom he overtook. "Do you not know?" she replied. "Are you a stranger

in the country, not to have heard that the great Druidess Bertha sacrifices to-day on Ascot Heath?" "I knew it not," returned Smith, and followed up his answer by an inquiry as to who the great Druidess Bertha might be. The peasant woman appeared to be quite shocked at his ignorance, but, with the gossiping propensity which occasionally besets the weaker portion of her sex, began instantly to impart to him all she knew and a good deal more.

Bertha, it seemed, was a person whose origin was shrouded in mystery. She had been educated by the Druids, and brought up as a female priestess of that reverend society. Although still young, she was supposed to have attained to great sanctity, and was immensely venerated by the peasantry. One thing alone distinguished her from the other Druids, namely, her unconquerable objection to human sacrifice; and Smith found, on further inquiry, that to-day's ceremony was to consist only of the slaughter of oxen and sheep, and the offering of corn and fruits to the deities, whose aid was to be once more invoked against the tyranny of the Great Boar of Windsor. The account which he had heard made our hero more than ever desirous to witness the ceremony and to see the Druidess, and he accordingly followed the crowd to the sacred heath upon which it was to take place.

Ascot Heath was at that time somewhat different from its present condition. You remember, Brother Rhine, when you were last in England, what a sight we saw together in that celebrated locality. All London seemed to have emptied itself upon Windsor and its neighbourhood. The heath was thronged with excited crowds.

Hundreds upon hundreds of carts, gigs, and carriages of every description crowded one upon the other, and you owned that Rhineland had nothing to equal our Ascot week. Very different was the condition of things at the time of which I speak. I need hardly tell you that there was no "grand stand" in those days; the "ring" was as yet unknown; "Aunt Sally" was not, and never a gipsy had as yet appeared in the country. But the heath was wide and wild, rough and rugged, a fit place for the enactment of any such strange rites as those which his companion had led Smith to anticipate. He pushed boldly forward until he reached a spot from whence he could view the ceremony.

On the very edge of the forest, beneath a gigantic oak, upon a piece of rising ground, stood a figure upon which he, in common with every one else around him, riveted his eyes with the most intense interest and attention. It was a woman of more than ordinary height, clothed from head to foot in white drapery, her hair falling loosely upon her shoulders, with a simple chaplet of oak-leaves over her forehead. Her features were such as impelled you to look a second time after you had once gazed upon her. Nobility was stamped upon her brow. Courage, truth, and every other virtue which ennobles those of mortal mould were imprinted upon the lineaments of that countenance. Erect she stood, gazing down upon the peasant crowd below; and while her right hand held the sickle with which she had been performing some of the mystic rites of her order, her left arm was far outstretched as she pointed in the direction of that part of the forest in which the mighty Boar had made his home.

It was evident to Smith that the sacrifice, whatever it



Bertha the Druidess.

might have been, had been concluded, and that she was about to speak. He bent forward eagerly to listen, so

that not one word should escape him ; and as all the people seemed animated by the same desire, a solemn and almost awful silence prevailed throughout the whole crowd. Then the Druidess spoke ; her words fell clear and shrill upon the ears of her audience like the clarion notes of the trumpet which calls forth hosts to battle, and they pierced at once to the heart of Smith as they rang through the startled air. And thus spoke the Druidess :—

“ Men of Britain’s Holy Isle,
 Spiritless and idle still
 Rest ye here, and all the while
 Forest demons work their will ?
 Barren lie your hungry fields,
 Yielding nought for human food,
 While your spirit tamely yields
 To the Tyrant of the Wood.
 Hear the Future ! To the gods
 While libations Druids pour,
 Britain’s Oak to ruin nods,
 Rotten to the very core !
 Craven spirits fear and hide
 From the devastating foe.
 Can the gods be satisfied
 With a race of cowards ? No !
 What the mighty gods inspire
 Bertha to her race imparts.
 Hear ye all ! the gods require
 Stalwart arms and valiant hearts.
 All the blood of victims slain
 Never can your country save,
 Till that country you sustain
 With the daring of the brave.”
 Yet are ye no craven race ;
 If yourselves ye learn’d to know,
 Never would ye turn your face
 From the coming of the foe.
 Ah ! the spirit moves me now,
 Ancient spirit of the oak ;
 ‘Neath its mighty spell I bow—
 Hear the words the gods evoke !

'Mid the throng I see below
Stands a man of courage true,
And I see a light I know
Flashing from his eye of blue.
'Tis the light of valiant strength,
And its flash reveals to me
That the hour is near at length
When my people shall be free ;
Free from terror and from yoke
Of the sanguinary Boar.
Let the hero strike the stroke ;
Ye are free for evermore !'

The Priestess pronounced her last words with such intense animation, as if inspired by some supernatural power, that they produced a wondrous effect upon those to whom they were addressed. Indeed, it was not only her manner of speaking, but the matter of the words to which she gave utterance, which was well calculated to excite the people. Bowed down and dispirited for years under a great misfortune, they suddenly heard that deliverance was at hand, and that he by whom it might be wrought was actually standing among them at that moment. The greatest excitement, therefore, naturally prevailed, and a low murmur of mingled joy, surprise, and awe ran through the crowd.

The Druidess, meanwhile, stood still as a stone statue upon the hillock under the oak, gazing forward with eyes fixed upon vacancy as if she were reading far into the Book of the Future, under the influence of some mighty spell. Her appearance, as of one in a trance, increased the reverential awe of the superstitious people, who remained for a few moments in a state of increasing doubt and wonder. Then some of them gathered courage and found voice to express the dearest wish of their hearts. "Holy Bertha!" they cried. "Sacred

Maiden ! Tell us who is our deliverer. Who is he that shall strike the stroke for our freedom ? Where is he ? How shall we find him ? ” And, as he spoke, the people pressed forward eagerly as near to the sacred hillock as their dread of the maiden’s sanctity would permit them to approach. With an imperious gesture she waved them back, and then, passing her hand across her brow, as if to brush away the trance which still partially obscured her vision for things present, she uttered the following words in a low and hurried tone :—

“ The strength of a god and the skill of a toad
Unite in the man who shall Windsor deliver ;
His name shall be hallow’d in every abode,
And henceforth shall be known in old England for ever ! ”

These words, although they possibly went but a very little way towards giving to the inquiring crowd the information they so anxiously desired, were of course very intelligible to Smith, even without the aid of any of that magic knowledge which he had acquired from his forest teachers. He was now certain, beyond all reasonable doubt, that the Druidess referred to him as the deliverer from the Great Boar, and that, having committed herself to such a prophecy, she and the priests of her order would, for their own sakes if for no better reason, do their very best to secure its fulfilment. But I am bound to say that other thoughts also occupied the breast of our hero. From the very first moment that he had set eyes upon the Druidess he had been struck with wondrous admiration. There was something in her appearance so majestic, so noble, and at the same time so winning, that the heart of Smith throbbed with new emotions, nor did he cease to gaze

earnestly at the sacred maiden during the whole time of her discourse. In fact, I believe that, almost unconsciously to himself, a fervent desire that Bertha the Druidess should become Mrs. Smith took possession of our hero's soul, and he fell a hopeless victim to "Love at first sight" without being aware of the fact.

Any friendly feeling, moreover, which might have been suggested by the outward appearance of the holy maid was tenfold increased when her words gave evidence that she was ready to help his accomplishment of that great object to which he had devoted his life. To be singled out from the crowd for praise, compliment, and prophecy of future distinction is an honour of which any man may be proud under general circumstances; but when the person who singles you out happens to be young and lovely, the flattery is not unfrequently of double sweetness, and tends to evoke a feeling which, if it takes its origin in gratitude, is not unlikely to become something warmer. Be this as it may, Smith felt towards the young Druidess as he had never felt before, and was by no means sorry that the circumstances in which he found himself rendered it absolutely necessary that he should seek a private interview with her as soon as possible. For, as no one but he himself could know that her words referred unmistakably to him, it was unlikely that he would be recognised as a leader or clothed with any authority unless some further steps were taken in the matter.

After having pronounced the last words, Bertha had hastily retreated behind the oak, and there was little chance that she would show herself again upon that occasion. But Smith had underrated both the foresight

of the Druidess and the intelligence of her hearers. Many of these had observed the presence amongst them of an entire stranger, and as, from a very early period of their history, Britons have been tolerably good hands at “putting two and two together,” they had arrived at the conclusion that this individual was extremely likely to be the deliverer whom the Priestess had declared she saw amid the throng below.

In those days, bashful modesty was not, as now, the characteristic of a British crowd. Instinctively they pressed around the stranger, and addressed to him several observations which savoured more of curiosity than politeness. They were good-natured, to be sure, as British crowds are even to the present day; but not recognising in him at once the qualities which had been so easily perceptible to the inspired Bertha, they questioned him familiarly and as one of themselves. It was not long, however, before their manner changed. Smith told them plainly that he came from the forest, that toads and toad-mysteries were known to him, and that so far at least he answered to the description which they had lately heard as that of their deliverer.

As they listened to his words, the respect of the simple rustics for the speaker greatly increased; his answers were whispered from one to the other, and there appeared a general disposition to welcome him as their leader, if leader indeed there was to be. Seeing that the opportunity was favourable, but yet too cautious to push matters far upon the first onset, Smith begged the crowd to disperse, but promised that, if they were of the same mind three days hence, he would meet them upon the heath at that time. To this they agreed;

and having with some difficulty escaped from sundry loiterers who followed him, gaping and staring as if he had been some newly discovered monster, our hero returned to the forest and reported his adventures to his friends the toads. The latter listened with much satisfaction to his account of all that had happened, and gave him valuable advice as to his future proceedings. In accordance with their instructions, he again journeyed to the oak of Ascot Heath upon the next evening, and sought an interview with the Priestess upon whom his hopes were centred.

Interviews with Druidesses were not, in those days, very easy of accomplishment, and were not unattended with danger. For, if the Druids did not happen to approve, and *did* happen to discover the fact, the culprit stood an excellent chance of being speedily sacrificed. Smith, however, had no fear, and, as is proverbially the case, fortune favoured the brave. He met the holy maiden walking in the forest before he reached the oak. I really cannot tell you exactly what passed at the interview, but I know it resulted (as such interviews not unfrequently do) in the appointment of another. This also took place without any obstacle arising, and the result was that, when the time appointed for the reassembling of the people had arrived, Smith's plans were pretty well matured.

Standing near the sacred oak, he addressed the crowd before him in brief but energetic words. He pointed out to them the misery which their country had so long endured through the ravages of the Great Boar. He declared that the thing was intolerable, and that it only rested with themselves to put an end to it by a

great and united effort. He professed himself willing to lead them if they would only engage to follow him, and was confident that, if he were obeyed, all would go well. If, indeed, they had any doubt about his being a fit person to lead them, let them only say so and he would at once yield to another. These words were received with much favour by many of his audience, but some of the more timid and doubtful still hesitated as to their course, when suddenly a voice spoke from the old oak in words of unmistakable import:—

“ This is the man and this the hour
To break the tyrant’s hateful power.
No longer, Englishmen, delay;
Choose—listen—follow—and obey ! ”

These words at once reassured every one, and effectually settled the question. Smith was unanimously elected leader, and, like other leaders, proceeded at once to declare his policy. He told his followers that the first thing to be done was to make a good road right into the heart of the forest. People are apt to magnify dangers about which they know little, and the thick and impenetrable nature of the Boar’s retreat greatly added to the idea of his wondrous power. The first thing, then, was to let the light of day in upon him, and, accordingly, the very next morning, a strong body of labourers commenced to work at a good, broad road, which should penetrate the heart of the forest.

Of course this undertaking occupied some time, during which the secret interviews between Smith and the fair Druidess were not unfrequent, and the brave young leader obtained much good advice as to his mode of procedure.

The most extraordinary part of the story is that, all this time, no one heard or saw anything of the Boar. Whether he knew less of magic than was supposed, and, being engaged on the other side of the forest, did not know what was going on near Ascot Heath—or whether he knew and didn't think it worth while to interfere—or whether he was idle, sleepy, ill, or anything else—I don't know; but he never interfered



The Road into the Forest.

at all until a long length of road had been made, and a gang of labourers had got very near his lair. Then, one fine morning, he rushed out with a number of his followers, ripping and goring right and left, and driving everything before him. It so happened that Smith was not with the workmen that day. Probably he had gone on some errand for the Druidess; but, however this may have been, the result was the same, and, in the absence

of our hero, the Boar had it all his own way. In consequence of this triumph, the monster gave a great feast of hogwash and potatoes to all his subjects, and their grunting afterwards was so loud and horrible that it was remembered for a period of many years in the neighbourhood of Windsor.

Smith, as you may suppose, was thoroughly disgusted when he found what had occurred, and all the more so as he felt that his presence might, and probably would, have prevented the misfortune. Nothing daunted, however, he resolved to repair the mischief as quickly as possible. He sent far and wide throughout the country for all the white horses which could possibly be secured, and begged as many of their owners as felt materially inclined to accompany their steeds. This was done under the sage advice of the toads, to whom it was well known that to white animals beyond all others has been given the power of resisting the influences of magic arts. The knowledge that Smith's movement was supported by the Druids materially operated to promote the success of his request. From all quarters white horses and horsemen came flocking to the appointed place on Ascot Heath, and upon a certain day which he had fixed the leader found himself at the head of a numerous body of cavalry. He next proceeded to arm every man with a long wooden spear pointed with iron, and having given them their watch-word and rallying cry, "Bacon," marched boldly towards the forest. And now began the contest with the powers of magic.

The Boar sent forth his legions, having for the nonce converted hundreds of pigs into creatures bearing the

form of man, whilst his own regiment of sharp-tusked boars acted as a reserve force in their own shape and form. They could not, however, prevail against the white army, protected by the wisdom of the toads and backed by the incantations of the saintly Druids. After a combat along the whole line which lasted for some hours, the magic forces of the Boar gave way on every side. Their resistance, indeed, stout and dogged as it had been at first, gave way at the sight of an enormous ham, boiled and ready for use, which at a critical moment of the contest was displayed by the orders of Smith at the top of a long pole. No porcine nature could withstand this spell, sure betokener of the fate of every vanquished and slaughtered pig. The enchanted animals (as the toads had privately told Smith would certainly be the case) resumed their natural shape by hundreds at the sight of this wondrous emblem, and fled with wild grunts into the forest, followed by the victorious army. On every side the white horsemen rode down the flying porkers, impaling them on their iron-tipped spears, and shouting "Bacon" until the forest rang again with the martial sound. Smith himself performed prodigies of valour, overthrowing and slaying numbers of the foe, and greatly assisting in bringing about the complete and terrible defeat which befell the forces of the Boar.

So it was that towards eventide the battle was practically over, for not a pig but had resumed his natural shape, not a foe but had either fallen or fled into the deep recesses of the forest and sought safety in ignominious concealment from the face of day. Yet fast within his lair remained the Great Boar himself, and no

one had as yet beheld him upon that day so fatal to his tribe. Why or wherefore he had not headed his troops is more than I can say. One would have supposed that his presence would have encouraged them, and that his continued seclusion within his lair must have been the most foolish proceeding on the part of the chief of an army who had so much at stake. But whatever reason he had, it is certain that he never appeared, and his people were slaughtered right and left without his ever coming to the rescue.

Smith, however, was not to be treated in this manner by his mighty enemy. Unless the latter were dealt with in some satisfactory way, he knew well enough that his victory would have been all in vain, and that the evil with which his country had so long been afflicted would be by no means ended. He hesitated not, therefore, to push boldly forward into the heart of the forest, and seek the tyrant in his lair. The wood was uncommonly thick, and progress extremely difficult. Gigantic brambles formed an almost insuperable barrier, twining round the legs of the traveller in a manner remarkably disagreeable, and forming at certain places an almost impregnable network of defence. The bushes, too, grew thickly where the brambles did not, huge oaks stood about wherever there was any space clear from bush and bramble, strange weeds cropped up around, and altogether the place was as wild and difficult of access as you can well imagine. Yet Smith pushed bravely on, with some of his chosen companions, until he suddenly found himself in an open space some sixty feet square, almost entirely surrounded by oak-trees, plentifully encircled by ivy of the most luxuriant growth. As he

entered this space, a deep voice uttered these words in terrible accents :—

“ How dares the child of loathsome toad
Unasked to enter this abode ?
No longer press thy childish whim—
Back ! or I tear thee limb from limb.”

The followers of the great deliverer were visibly staggered by these awful words, more especially as the speaker was nowhere to be seen. Smith himself, however, being perfectly prepared for some such proceeding on the part of his enemy, was not for a moment disconcerted in the smallest degree. By the advice of the powers which had directed and shielded him throughout the whole of his arduous enterprise, he had armed himself with an oaken staff, cut from a sacred tree which grew near to my banks, and which was held in peculiar estimation by the people. This staff, having been dipped in my river, and afterwards heavily tipped with lead, was a weapon of considerable power, and the gallant Smith brandished it on high above his head as he replied to his invisible enemy in the following words :—

“ Boast loud and long, thou villain Boar,
And trust in dealings magic ;
More humbly shalt thou shortly roar,
And meet an ending tragic.
Come forth and try ! I thee defy,
By mighty aid of Druid,
And this good staff, which lately I
Have dipt in Thames’s fluid.
Come forth, I say ! No more delay !
You rascal ! what, you *won’t* stir ?
I brand thee, in the face of day,
A vile and hideous monster ! ”

The words were scarcely out of his mouth, when a

horrible noise between a grunt and a roar burst upon the ears of the attacking party, and the Great Boar of Windsor broke from his lair and rushed furiously upon his enemies. His eyes glared like fireballs—his bristles were erect and awful to see—his tusks seemed sharper and more enormous than any one would have supposed possible—and his whole appearance evinced such a mixture of strength and ferocity as might well have caused the stoutest heart to quail before his approach. Fury was in his countenance, and frightful was the expression of his face as he charged headlong down upon Smith, with a force which it seemed impossible to withstand. Uttering his war-cry in the shape of a suppressed but horrid grunt, he held his head low, and was evidently bent upon ripping up the intruder with the least possible delay.

To be ripped up, however, was by no means Smith's intention. Springing hastily aside, he dealt the Boar a blow with his staff as he passed in the mad career which he was unable to check. The blow, dealt with the hero's full force upon the back of the monster's head, changed his grunt into a squeak of pain, but otherwise had no visible effect upon him. Rendered doubly furious by the failure of his first rush, the Boar now turned upon some of Smith's companions, upon whom he trusted to have wreaked an easy vengeance. But, with admirable sagacity, Smith had foreseen the possibility of such an occurrence, and, instructed by the toads, had carefully provided against it. Each of his followers who had entered the lair, besides being armed with spears as I have described, had in his hand a short stick upon the end of which was fastened a sausage.

The order given was, that, if the Boar attacked, this should simply be held out in front of the person in danger, which order you may well believe was faithfully obeyed. The effect was certainly marvellous. At the sight of each sausage the Boar's powers appeared to fail him, and he turned with a disappointed groan to find another victim. One man, indeed, found the protection useless, and was miserably ripped up and destroyed by the monster. A momentary panic prevailed, but it was fortunately remembered that the luckless individual had brought his own sausage from his own manufactory, and that sundry of his neighbours who had lost their cats had more than once thrown the darkest suspicion upon the character and quality of the article which he supplied. It is therefore probable that the virtue inherent in sausages made from the lawful animal was wanting in his case, and that he perished justly as a deceiver of his fellow-men.

But the Boar could make no head against a body of men so well prepared for his assault. He foamed at the mouth—he roared—he grunted—he howled—he rushed madly to and fro—but all his efforts were useless. Then once more he turned himself round and rushed with a frantic force upon the leader of his foes. Smith was at that instant standing close to an oak-tree, and so sudden was the Boar's attack that he had barely time to avoid it by a vigorous spring which he made, catching as he did so a branch above his head, and swinging himself up out of harm's way.

The Boar, meanwhile, unable to stop himself, rushed with great force against the tree. To his infinite surprise, and indeed to the astonishment of all who saw it,

the hard surface of the oak yielded to his touch, his tusks penetrated the bark, and he remained there firm and fast, caught by the head and held as if by a vice. At the same moment a strain of sweet and solemn music burst upon the ears of those who were present, and from behind the oak-tree stepped the figure of the Priestess Bertha, clad as she had been on the previous occasion of her addressing the people, save that she wore upon her head a wreath of mistletoe, bright and glistening with berries. Walking up to the still struggling Boar, she calmly sat down upon him, just as if he had been a camp-stool, upon which he groaned audibly, but remained perfectly still. Then the Priestess proceeded to speak :—

“ The Boar is vanquished in the fight,
And ended is his former might.
Cursed by his yoke no more ye be,
But Windsor’s children shall be free.
Yet be ye cautious, firm, and wise,
Or other foes may still arise,
And ye may scarcely yet escape
From boars in brute or human shape.
Still, good advice I give to you :
Be honest, loyal, just, and true ;
Drink not the wine that tastes of cork ;
Keep down the pigs by eating pork ;
Love sausages (avoiding shams) ;
And don’t forget to cure your hams.
So, if your lives are good and pure,
Your happiness shall be secure ;
Windsor to high renown shall soar,
And ne’er again be spoiled by boar.
Meanwhile, ’tis time I play my part,
And banish hence foul magic art ! ”

Then, slowly rising from her strange seat, and extending her arm high in the air above the miserable Boar, she began to mutter to herself in a low tone mystic

words of dark and wondrous import, which had all the more effect upon her hearers because nobody understood them. Presently she turned again to the listening army, and thus addressed the Boar, her countenance bearing a stern expression and her whole appearance being one of queenly dignity :—

“ Foul beast ! henceforth thy power is stayed,
Thy former vassals shall be free ;
Thine art no more shall be displayed,
But Windsor Forest boarless be !
Yet must thou not this forest leave,
Or quit the place, alive or dead,
Whence thou hast caused the land to grieve,
And tears in oceans to be shed.
In altered form remaining here,
Receive, vile tyrant, this thy ban :
Be filled henceforth with timid fear,
And tremble at the sight of man.
Henceforth on roots and insects feed ;
And yet, when nobler creatures die,
Be thou suspected of the deed,
A hated sight to keeper’s eye ! ”

She spoke ; and as the words fell from her inspired lips, a wondrous and melancholy change came over the unhappy animal to whom they were addressed. His tusks fell off, his head diminished, his body grew smaller even while she was speaking, and, as she ceased, the once great Boar stood there in the presence of his enemies, neither more nor less than an unusually large hedgehog. Shouts of mingled joy and astonishment broke from the surrounding peasants as they perceived this highly satisfactory transformation taking place upon their dreaded foe. There he stood, trembling and shivering before them, furtively casting his eyes right and left as if in search of some hiding-place to which

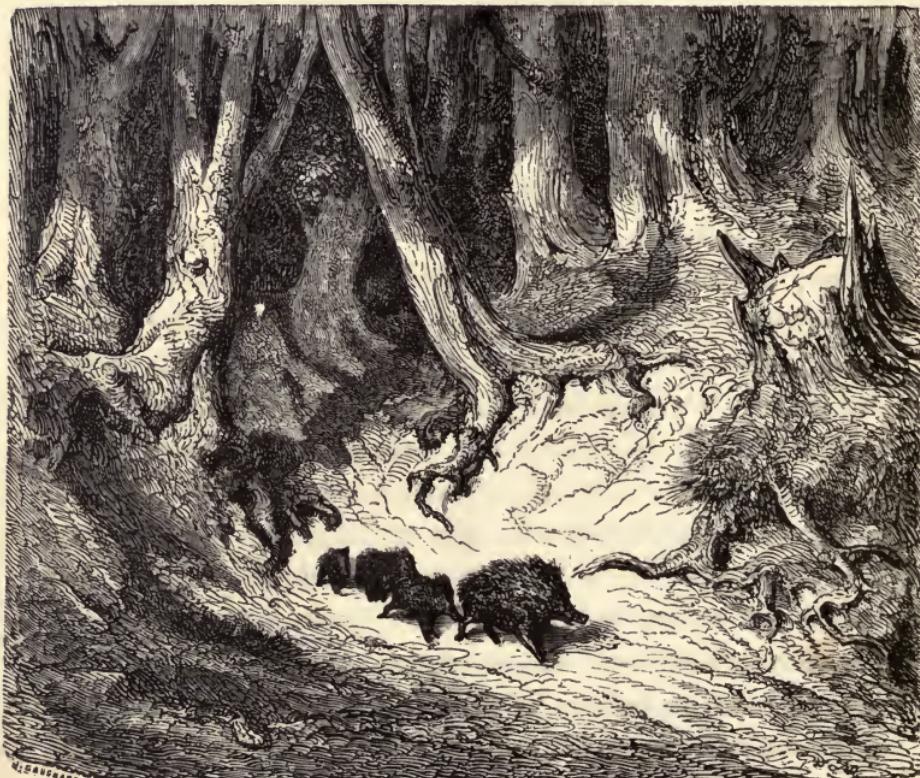
he might betake himself at once. Then, after a moment or two, he curled himself up after the general manner of hedgehogs into a round, impenetrable ball, a proceeding which evoked shouts of laughter from those who had lately trembled at his very glance, but who now felt the most supreme contempt for their vanquished enemy. As they stood and gazed upon him, the transformed animal presently unrolled himself again, and scuttled away as fast as he could among the dry leaves, making, with a new but natural instinct, for a place of concealment beneath the roots of the enormous trees which grew around the spot. And in fact, so far as this history concerns the Great Boar of Windsor, Brother Rhine, I might as well bring it to a close at once, for little more was ever heard of him. The blow struck at Boardom throughout the kingdom by the destruction of his power was very great, and the race gradually died away and became extinct. Not so by any means the hedgehogs, who from that time forth mightily increased all over England, and who down to the present day love to make it their boast that they are lineally descended from the Great Boar of Windsor. So proud of ancient ancestry are even the brute beasts of creation, aping that arrant fool, man, in this as well as sundry other follies.

It is curious to observe how exactly the prophecy of the Druidess has been fulfilled with regard to these hedgehogs. They live, as we know, upon roots and insects, and it has been over and over again demonstrated by learned naturalists that their physical formation is such as to preclude the possibility of their being carnivorous animals. But tell a gamekeeper this, and he will laugh

you to scorn. The words of the Druidess have come true enough in this instance; and if a nest of eggs is found destroyed, or a young pheasant torn or slain, the hedgehog is declared to be the culprit, and his unhappy race is persecuted even unto death.

Tradition says, however, that death has never fallen upon the Great Boar himself, or that if his body has really perished, as one would suppose to have been the case long ago, his spirit still haunts the locality which his power and his crimes rendered so celebrated in those days of yore. Certain it is, that if you happen to know the site of the Boar's lair, which of course I know, Brother Rhine, but which is hidden from the knowledge of all mortals save those favoured by Fairy-land power, you may sometimes hear tidings of its former occupant. Wander forth on a clear moonlight night, hide yourself securely among the brushwood or behind the gigantic oaks which still exist, and you will see all that is left of the monster who was so long the scourge and terror of the place. A large hedgehog, bearing the weight of many years upon his back, will issue from beneath the roots of some of the old trees, followed by several smaller beings of the same species. Slowly and sadly he will creep, with feeble steps and decrepit gait, down the open space in front of the trees, and pass before you, uttering a low grunt of retrospective misery as he crawls over the altered scenes of his departed greatness. Move not; raise not a finger; keep entire silence; and as you gaze upon the unhappy wretch, let pity rather than scorn take possession of your heart; and when after his short walk he returns shaking with age and sorrow, and once more creeps into his humble

hiding-place, ponder over the shortness and instability of earthly power and wealth, and remember that you have beheld all that remains of that terrible being who was once so infamously notorious as the Great Boar of Windsor.



The Last of the Boar.

But although I told you that, so far as the Boar was concerned, my story might very well have ended here, you cannot have listened to me with the attention which you have deigned to bestow without wishing to know something more of the fortunes of the other personages of whom I have spoken. As soon as the hedgehog had

retired, and their apprehensions were once and for all removed, the worthy peasants broke out into what is nowadays called a "truly British cheer." While they did this, the Priestess Bertha took the opportunity of retiring into the forest, so that when the good people had cheered enough, and were getting rather hoarse, they found that she had disappeared. The whole of their attention, therefore, was concentrated upon Smith, whom they surrounded with expressions of the warmest gratitude, and overwhelmed with thanks for the ability, courage, and discretion which he had evinced in the conduct of the whole affair. Had it been a few centuries later, they would doubtless have presented him with the freedom of their city, supposing them to have had one. As it was, they could do little but thank him, and declare themselves anxious that he should be their chief, or king, or anything else he pleased. Smith, however, stood moodily aside, leaning upon his spear, and declined to accept the offered dignity. The people were still crowding around him and urging him to complete the good work which he had just begun, by ruling over those whom he had freed from an intolerable yoke, when an event took place which entirely changed the character of the proceedings.

Suddenly there appeared among the trees and amid the people a number of Druids, clad in the vestments which they habitually wore, and brandishing the weapons with which they usually perpetrated the sacrifices which accompanied their most solemn rites. Without more ado they proceeded to seize upon Smith, and declared to the astonished people that the gods had intimated their will that he should be immediately sacrificed.

This was by no means welcome news to those who heard it, nor could they readily understand why the Druids should desire the life of one who had hitherto shown the greatest reverence for them and their religion, and who had, moreover, just rendered a great public service.

Murmurs began to arise from the crowd, murmurs deep and angry, to the effect that jealousy of Smith's influence was at the bottom of the movement, and that the Druids, who had never been able to get rid of the Boar until Smith had appeared on the scene, were ready to kill him out of the way as soon as ever he had accomplished the task which had been too much for themselves. Anxious to remove an impression which, if allowed to remain, might become the source of danger to their authority over the people, one of the chief Druids jumped upon the trunk of a fallen tree and begged leave to explain. This having been readily granted, the venerable man stated that the people ought to know by this time that reverend ecclesiastics never did anything wrong, and that mean or ignoble motives were never harboured in their holy hearts. "But," he continued, "although Smith had certainly rendered considerable service to the people (and this the Druids would be the last to deny), he had nullified all his claims to their gratitude by the commission of an offence which struck a deep blow at the very root of that religion which was the sole basis of their social order, and their only hope alike for the present and the future. He had ventured to speak of love to the holy Druidess Bertha, and there was every reason to believe that they were privately married!"

At these words a thrill of horror ran through the crowd, who had been taught to believe a Druidess to be a species of being superior to the ordinary feelings of mortals, and one to whom marriage should have been an entire impossibility. They dared offer no further opposition to the Druids, and were about to suffer their gallant defender and deliverer to be dragged away to a cruel death without further effort to save him. But all was not over yet. Smith had allies of whom his cowardly followers and his bigoted persecutors were alike ignorant. With a mighty effort he shook off the priests who held him, and in a stentorian voice shouted aloud the words of magic token, "Help, oh, my Toddlekins!" Scarce were the words out of his mouth when a toad of extraordinary size hopped from the forest into the open space, and looked around with eyes that sparkled with angry indignation. At the sight of him the Druids felt their hearts fail; their arms dropped by their sides, their weapons fell from their hands, and they lacked alike the will and the power to harm their intended victim.

Meanwhile the toad who had been adjured under the name of Toddlekins gave a jerk with his legs right and left, shook off his toad-skin, and appeared in the shape of a young man of singularly prepossessing appearance. His form was tall and manly, his beautifully shaped head was covered with dark hair, and the remarkably sweet expression of his countenance was enhanced by the extraordinary beauty and brightness of his eyes. Looking about him right and left, and waving his hand in a careless manner, he addressed the people as follows: "My friends," he said, "you will excuse me for making the remark that you are a set of very parti-

cular fools. In order to convince you that I have a right to say this, I will tell you with plain brevity who and what *I* am. I was born, never mind when or where, into this world, and being found in all respects much too good for it, the Fates decided that I should wait for a certain number of centuries before I again came into it as a mortal, and should meanwhile pass my time as a powerful fairy. As such I have lived in Toadland for some time past, and have especially watched over the education of my friend Smith. That is all I shall tell you about myself, except that my power has aided you to achieve your freedom, and will now prevent you from suffering a crime to be perpetrated which would disgrace you for ever. But I have something more to tell you about the person called Smith. He is one for whom I cherish a particular regard, and you ought to do the same. For has he not delivered you from your ancient enemy? But he has done more. The very crime of which he is accused, if crime it be, has been done in *your* service. He has fulfilled the old proverb, which it was necessary to do before the Boar's power could be destroyed. This proverb declared that the blood of the "slayer and the slain" must be blended together before the Boar's reign should cease. Do you ask how this has been done? I will read you the riddle. The father of the Priestess Bertha was none other than an old Druid who sacrificed (most improperly) the male parent of my friend Smith. He had no right to a daughter at all, but of this I will say nothing except that the holy maiden has possession of the very spectacles which he always wore on sacrificing days, and which he bestowed upon her at his death, convey-

ing to her at the same time the information respecting her birth which I have just given you. Thus, then, the blood of the slayer and slain have been blended together by the marriage of the daughter of the former with the son of the latter. The Boar has consequently been got rid of, and unless you are the most ungrateful set of varlets that ever breathed, you will tell the Druids to go home and mind their own business, will celebrate the nuptials of the happy couple by a jolly good dinner, and break up at the close of the evening with 'three cheers for Smith !'

This speech of the fairy Toddlekins was received with rapturous applause by every one present, especially the closing allusion to a "jolly good dinner," which in every age has had a decided attraction for Englishmen. The Druids, who were wise in their generation, at once determined not to risk the loss of their influence by further opposition to that which was evidently the popular will, and was moreover supported by the powers of Fairyland. So, determined to make the best of it without further delay, they pretended to have been entirely convinced by the speech they had just heard, and not only joined in the cheers which greeted its conclusion, but volunteered to stand the dinner into the bargain ! They proceeded to do still more ; within an incredibly short space of time they fetched Bertha (who had previously stood no inconsiderable chance of being sacrificed too), and presented her and Smith together before the fairy youth for his approving benediction. This, as you may easily suppose, was freely and kindly given.

I hardly think I need tell you any more. Smith still

declined to reign over the people, and, considering the experience he had had of their fickle nature, I don't think he was far wrong. Nor do I deem him to have erred in his determination to leave that particular neighbourhood, being under the belief that when holy men have once intended to sacrifice a fellow, they are never very safe customers for him afterwards. So the happy couple very soon departed from Windsor, and I know very little more about them except that their family is not extinct at the present day, and is by no means likely to become so. I believe they lived very happily, and I never heard of any unpleasantness between them. Still I confess that, if I had been Smith, I should have been afraid to marry a woman who could change a boar into a hedgehog, lest at any time she should take it into her head to exercise her powers upon her husband in a manner which might have been inconvenient, to say the least of it.

I am scarcely in a position to tell you whether the fairy Toddlekins has ever left Toadland again and come once more upon earth as a mortal. I might make a guess, Brother Rhine, if I chose, even at *this*, but perhaps I had better be silent. Many a pleasant youthful face, worthy of Fairyland, frequents my waters at times, and the old college of Eton has sent me such over and over again. But if I should single out any particular face and form, and declare to the astonished world that therein I recognised the noble fairy Toddlekins of the Druid times, I don't suppose anybody would believe me; and even you, Brother Rhine, might think it possible that I was mistaken. So now I have finished my legend, and as I see that

you have not neglected your flagon of wine meanwhile, I hope that you have derived therefrom sufficient inspiration to be able to give me a tale of your own fair country which shall eclipse in interest the account which I have ventured to give you of the Great Boar of Windsor!

As soon as Father Thames had thus concluded his story, his companion clapped his hands in an approving manner. . “That,” he remarked, “is a capital legend, and ends, as a legend should, in a comfortable manner. I have many curious tales of my own river, but none, I think, more curious than the one you have related. However, as it is now my turn, I will do my best, and, with your good leave, will tell you the famous story of “Martha’s Vengeance.”

Father Thames having gravely bowed approval, the monarch of the Rhine thus proceeded :—

Martha’s Vengeance.

The Baroness Von Bandelboots was a woman of an awful temper. Her husband trembled before her, her servants hardly felt that their souls were their own when she spoke, the vassals of the Bandelboots estates shivered in their shoes when they met her, and the neighbours all kept out of her way as much as possible. And yet there was no reason why this lady should have been so violent and have made herself and others so miserable! You would have thought she had everything to content her. The husband, good easy man, let her do just as she liked, and cared nothing for her in-

dulgence of all her whims and fancies, so long as he was secure of his favourite pipe and his comfortable arm-chair after dinner.

She had several daughters of various ages who had never caused her a moment's uneasiness, and after some years of anxious expectation a son had been born who would in due course of time succeed to the honours of the family, and who meanwhile was, naturally enough, the legitimate object of her maternal devotion. Moreover, the Baroness lacked not riches. Not only were the estates of the Baron large and productive around his castle on the Rhine, but he had other distant property which brought him in no inconsiderable revenue, and he readily gave to his beloved wife control over wealth sufficient to have contented the most extravagant of females. Besides this, she had a house which was really charming, built upon an island in the middle of a lake, only a short distance from my beloved river, and furnished with everything that good taste could support and a full purse supply. Nor was she without neighbours, even in a country wherein neighbours are generally scarce. Several other castles stood within driving distance of the Bandelboots domain, and the Baroness could with very little exertion procure for herself society, if society she desired.

Nevertheless the good dame's temper was a curse to herself and everybody she came near, and she seemed to delight in scolding for scolding's sake. This unfortunate propensity had been productive of much discomfort and inconvenience to the Baron's household, even before the particular events which I am about to relate. Several old and valuable servants had left, either having

been dismissed by the Baroness in moments of passion, or having found themselves unable to stay consistently with their self-respect, after having been subjected to the strong language which she frequently used upon such occasions, which was, I am sorry to say, more than once followed by personal violence.

One servant she had indeed retained for several years, and this was her own maid, Martha Schweinvolt. This woman was one of a singularly unprepossessing appearance, and of a certain age. Her nose was long and somewhat like a hook, her forehead receded in a strange angle immediately above her eyebrows, her ears were remarkably large and low down on her head, her chin protruded, her neck was of unnatural length, her hands and feet larger than those of ordinary women, and her figure tall, lank, and ungainly. To such a person did the Baroness entrust the care of her wardrobe and the adorning of her noble self; and although she frequently indulged her with a good scolding, the maid received it all with stolid indifference, perhaps because, as her vinegar aspect seemed to denote, she herself could be cross upon occasions, and thought it not unreasonable that her mistress should be the same.

One day it chanced, indeed, that the kettle, so to speak, boiled over. Martha Schweinvolt had been engaged upon her mistress's back hair, and the latter, seated in "demi-toilette" upon a low stool, had been reading a novel. Suddenly she took it into her head to drop the book and take up a small hand looking-glass to see how her maid was getting on. In so doing she made a forward movement, which, as Martha happened at that instant to have the hair tight in hand, had

the natural effect of making the lady feel as if her maid had suddenly given her hair a violent and unpleasant pull. Without for a moment considering that it was entirely her own fault, the Baroness directly flew into a most furious passion. She stormed and raved against the woman until she was almost black in the face, and



The Baroness and her back hair.

then, to finish matters off, struck her with either hand a violent box on the ears on each side of her head, and hustled her out of the room as if she was more than half inclined to kick her down-stairs then and there.

Once outside the door, Martha Schweinvolt became perfectly livid with rage. She turned round on the top of the stairs, faced the Baroness's room, and shook her

fist vehemently towards it, vowing by her eleven-o'clock bread and cheese and beer (the most solemn oath known among domestic servants of the feminine gender) that she would have her revenge. Nor was Martha a person by any means likely to forget or neglect such a vow. Day and night she brooded over the matter, and ground her teeth savagely together as she remembered the indignity to which she had been subjected. And the more she brooded, the more determined did she become to seek vengeance from some quarter whence it could be surely and safely obtained. By herself she knew she could do but little; and as she was by no means popular among the other servants of the household, she could place but little reliance on any assistance from them. How to proceed, therefore, she had great doubts, but to proceed in some manner she was quite determined.

Now unfortunately for me, Brother Thames, as you may perhaps be aware, a part of my stream has always been more or less under the influence of a class of river demons from which you in England are happily free. I believe a milder kind of demon exists in Scotland under the name of water kelpie, and possibly there may be something of the sort here and there even in your favoured English rivers, but you have nothing to match the demons of the Rhine. It is not a theme upon which I love to dwell. No respectable river desires to have anything to do with such creatures, and I frankly confess that at times they have brought my waters into great disrepute.

Well (or rather not at all "well," according to my view of the case), it happened that the Rhine near the castle of the Baron von Bandelboots was terribly in-

fested by these noxious spirits, only too ready at all times to do any mischief in their power to any human being, or to assist one mortal in gratifying his or her malice against another. To these demons did Martha Schweinvolt determine to appeal, and made up her mind to risk, if necessary, body and soul in order to obtain vengeance upon her hated mistress.

Very often I am able to prevent the wicked plans and machinations of these spirits, and I never fail to do so if I can manage it. If things had gone rightly, I should have stopped the affair of which I am about to tell you, and nipped it in the bud if possible, either by overflowing my banks suddenly and drowning the wretch Martha, or by some other means which my knowledge of the world would have enabled me to provide. But it most unfortunately happened that the nymphs and trolls and friendly elves of the river and forests near had given me an entertainment that very evening, at which they played me several very curious tricks. The jovial rascals insisted on my drinking my Steinbergh in large pint measures, so that I got rather more than my usual allowance; then they fastened a huge white beard upon my chin, pulled my whiskers, combed my hair, whispered soft things in my ear, climbed on my knees, and altogether kept me so well amused, that I never went out at all that evening to patrol the river banks, according to my usual habit, and was therefore entirely ignorant of all that occurred, until I was told it some time after by a member of the Rhine Conservancy Board, who had it from good authority.

It seems that Martha Schweinvolt, having gone out

late that evening, wandered down to the river, and there prayed vehemently to the demons for aid. Such prayers are hardly necessary to procure the assistance of bad spirits, when their object is to do mischief to somebody else. A demon, therefore, who happened to be near the spot, forthwith presented himself to the waiting-maid,



Father Rhine and his Elves.

and that so suddenly that she fainted away immediately. Demons, however, being very skilful in the ways of women, know perfectly well that the best way to ensure their speedy recovery in such cases is to take no notice whatever of their proceeding. The evil spirit, therefore, followed this sensible plan, and waited patiently until Martha "came to," when he politely

inquired what her wishes might be and what service he could render.

The woman unfolded her grievance, and used several bad expressions with regard to her mistress, which caused her companion to grin with sympathetic pleasure. He then inquired what revenge she desired to take; to which Martha replied that she should like to have the power given her of inflicting severe personal chastisement upon the Baroness. But the demon scouted the idea. The pride of birth and rank work too much good to the objects which are dear to evil spirits to make them partial to any plan for the degradation of either one or the other, and such a degradation would have been inflicted had the well-born Baroness been subjected to personal chastisement at the hands of her menial. Besides this, the power of the demon was but limited, and this would have been possibly beyond it.

Martha suggested several other things, but at length she broke out in joyful tones, as if an unusually bright idea had suddenly struck her: "I know!" she cried; "let's do something to the child, the young Baron Hubert. Strangle him, or lame him for life, or make him humpbacked; that will wring her old heart-strings!"

On hearing these words, the demon, who was a decent fellow at bottom, though withal up to any mischief of a reasonable kind, positively shuddered at the bitterness of the waiting-maid's speech, accompanied as it was with a look of fiendish exultation which would have done credit to the worst of devils.

"Stop a bit, miss, stop a bit," said he. "Fair and softly wins the race; you go too fast, and want too much all at once. You must know that we demons cannot do

everything just how and when we please, as you seem to imagine. Not a bit of it! Fortunately for mortals who have enemies (and who has not?) our power is limited; and even suppose you had the child with you at this moment, I could not do what you require."

"Then," exclaimed Martha angrily, "what in the name of goodness *can* you do?"

At these words the demon shuddered visibly. "Don't use such language, young lady," said he, "if you want *my* help, but listen attentively to what I am about to say."

Much flattered at being called a young lady, and probably all the more so from her knowledge that to neither the substantive nor the adjective had she any right whatever, Martha bent her head forward eagerly, to hear what the water-demon had to suggest.

"If you like," said he, "I can change the child."

"Change the child!" cried the disappointed woman; "why, what would be the good of *that*?"

"All the good in the world," replied her counsellor, "if you really wish to plague the mother. In the first place, the child I shall put in the place of the young Baron will not be nearly so pretty as the real child, and this will gall the mother's heart not a little, unless baronesses are unlike other women. Then this false child will have a very much worse disposition. He will be cunning, ill-natured, greedy, mischievous, and a plague to the whole household."

"The deuce he will!" cried Martha hurriedly. "But he won't plague *me*, will he?"

"Better language by a good deal, my dear," rejoined the demon, smiling good-humouredly at the exclama-

tion of his companion ; " but as to the inquiry you make, I can hardly reply. Should the little changeling, however, prove any annoyance even to yourself, I am sure you would willingly submit thereto in consideration of the glorious revenge which you will wreak upon the wretched mother. Why, your poor ears must even now be tingling from the effects of those shameful slaps, and, if I were in your place, it would be long enough before I forgot them ! "

" Don't be afraid, Mr. Demon," answered the maid, gnashing her teeth fiercely as she spoke. " I am not one to forget or forgive either, and, after all, a child can't really annoy me much. I'll risk it, anyhow, so that my brute of a mistress is made to suffer."

" That's right, my brave girl," merrily replied her friend, smiling with as pleasant a look as he knew how to put on. " That shows the true spirit of a German lady. Never fear, you shall have your revenge, and that speedily. Thereupon he commenced a series of questions as to the habits of the household and the rooms which were occupied by the youthful Baron, and having ascertained all the particulars which he required, bade Martha Schweinvolt return home, and rest assured that her desire should be accomplished upon the innocent baby, and his mother made to rue bitterly the hour when she first laid hands upon her waiting-maid.

Martha departed, having, I suppose, in the first instance given some such pledge to the demon as these creatures are in the habit of exacting from those who seek their good offices, which usually consists of a simple arrangement regarding their future which they have no power whatever to make, and which may

hereafter be set aside on an appeal to the proper tribunal.

Meanwhile, the Baroness von Bandelboots had not the slightest suspicion of the calamity which was hanging over herself and her family. She ate, drank, slept, and scolded after her usual fashion, and did not alter her behaviour one whit after the adventure with her waiting-maid, which had so painfully affected the latter.

The young Baron Hubert was but a few months old, and his nurse, Sophie Grutchen, had the sole charge of his precious person. His nursery was, as luck would have it, on the side of the castle facing the river; but I apprehend that to demons and creatures of that description the situation of the apartment would have made but little difference, and indeed there was the lake to cross in any case.

Late one evening the demon set out to fulfil his promise. He swam the lake, climbed the wall of the castle, entered the room in which the young Baron slept by the window, and, during the scarcely more than momentary absence of the nurse, abstracted the baby from his cot, deposited therein an elfin child of the same size, and departed with the real baby by the same way he had come.

Now, the little Baron had, from his first entrance into the world, been distinguished by his remarkably docile and tractable nature. He rarely cried, never fretted, and was, in consequence, a general pet, so far as such a term can be applied to an infant of such tender age. Within an hour or two, however, after the occurrence which I have just related, Mother Grutchen began to

find her charge less quiet and more troublesome than had previously been the case. She forthwith reported the fact to the Baroness, who, however, took her to task sharply for the same, saying that it was all fancy, and that the dear child was a little angel. This the poor nurse by no means wished to deny, but it entered her head that there were different kinds of angels, and that even some of these might occasionally be troublesome. She determined faithfully to do her duty by the child nevertheless, and to make no more complaints to her mistress. The latter was not slow, however, to find out that something was amiss with the infant. The very next morning, when it was brought to her, she looked at it with a strange and startled expression, and declared that it was not her child.

The River-Demon Thief.

This was an unpleasant and curious exclamation, and put Mother Grutchen in a terrible flurry. She owned that she thought the young Baron looked rather queer, but remarked that babies varied considerably from time to time; and, moreover, that as she had scarcely had him out of her sight since the day he was born, he could not by any possibility be anything else than the young Baron. Still the Baroness held to her opinion, and

vowed and declared that this was not the right child.

Upon this the Baron was appealed to at once. He, poor man, was terribly annoyed at being asked the question. Proud as he had been from the first of his infant son, he was one of those who held the theory that all babies are, up to a certain age, very much alike, and was positively quite incapable of pronouncing upon the identity of his own child. He put on his large gold-rimmed spectacles, stared vacantly down upon the infant, and said several things which had nothing whatever to do with the question.

This put the Baroness in a passion, which by no means mended matters at all, and there seemed every probability of a general row. But Martha Schweinvolt, who had been hovering about the door, waiting to be summoned, now found an excuse for entering the room, and so strongly expressed her decided belief and conviction that the child was the right child, and none other, that the good nurse felt her own opinion coming more strongly to the same conclusion. The Baron, for very peace and quietness, agreed with the two servants; and the Baroness, finding them all against her, had a regular good scold all round, and said no more about it.

Thus it came to pass, Brother Thames, that the child Hubert was carried off by the water-demon, and a wretched little changeling put in his place and accepted as the young heir. It was not long before his evil propensities began to develop themselves. He could scarcely walk alone before he was in mischief, and, indeed, long before this time he knocked over his mother's morning cup of tea whenever he could manage to do so

in his early visits to her bed, and scratched the Baron's face, as he lay asleep, with a tiny fist which seemed hardly capable of hurting so much as it did.

He grew fast for a short time, and then remained as if he would never grow any bigger. But his appetite was more like that of a full-grown man, nor was he particular where or what he ate. At breakfast he would finish off a huge bowl of porridge, and make his old nurse tilt over the bowl so that he might lick off the last drop from the edge. He would clutch at everything on the dining-room table if brought in during meals, and roar and cry loudly if the things he wanted were not immediately given to him.

As he grew older, his conduct by no means improved. Not only was he abominably rude to his supposed father and mother, but he took every opportunity of endeavouring to make them fall out. He would, with an utter disregard of truth, but with a wonderful air of innocence, tell the Baroness how he had heard the Baron say she had a bad temper, and was a disagreeable woman; whilst he would tell the Baron, as an affair of everyday occurrence, that his wife spoke of him as a lazy sot, who was no companion whatever to her, and spent his life in eating, drinking, and smoking.

These little things were scarcely calculated to improve the happiness of the worthy couple, but this was by no means the only channel through which the little wretch poured discomfort upon the household. He set everybody by the ears whenever he could, and showed an utter heartlessness of character, coupled with a reckless depravity of disposition, which was perfectly horrible. He roared with laughter on being told of any misfortune

having happened to another person, and scowled sulkily when any one fell in with a piece of good luck. Crushing flies on the windows was one of his earliest amusements,



The Greedy Child.

and when this had become monotonous, he used to torture any animal he could get hold of with a cruelty beyond belief. He would stick pins in his pony's neck

to make it dance, as he said, and indulge in screams of laughter at its suffering. He snipped off his dog's ears with a sharp pair of scissors, put the house-cat into the copper full of boiling water until its yells brought the cook to save it, and loved better than anything to get hold of some of the skewers out of the kitchen, in order to impale upon them any unfortunate mouse which he could find in the traps.

If any visitor came to the castle, he was fortunate indeed if he escaped unhurt. The little wretch began upon him as soon as he entered the house, creeping slyly behind him in order to cut off the buttons of his coat, give him a cruel pinch when least expected, and even sometimes went the length of running a pin into his leg. And when the unhappy gentleman rose to depart, if he did not find his coat-tails tied fast to the chair, ten to one but he was tripped up, as he ran down the stairs, by a thin but strong string, tied ankle-high by the young Baron about half-way down, nearly sure to produce a most awkward fall, the annoyance of which was increased by the triumphant and insulting chuckle of the little villain, who, perched on the highest step, or peeping through the banisters above, would watch with eager delight to witness the effects of his wicked trick.

It is not surprising that the young rascal was cordially detested throughout the whole household. Indeed, they had small cause to do anything else but detest him. There was no trouble he did not give the servants, and no trick which he did not play them. If he met the housemaids on the stairs or in the passages he invariably blew out their candles, or ran hastily against them, as

if by accident, so as if possible to make them drop any tray or jug they might be carrying. He rang the bell constantly for nothing, and pointed and laughed at the footman who came hurrying to answer it. He turned the lamp-oil into the soup just as the cook was about to send it up for the Baron's dinner, put a quantity of vinegar into the beer which the butler had carefully drawn for the "hall" supper, and smeared the groom of the chamber's chair in "the room" so thickly with bird-lime, that the respected individual in question had the greatest difficulty in ever getting out of it again. In short, he became the torment of the house, and everybody wished most devoutly that he had never been born.

The only consolation was that, somehow or other, he selected Martha Scweinvolt as his principal victim. That woman's life became a burden to her. Her thimble was constantly missing, and, when put on hastily, was more than once full of tar or glue, cunningly placed therein by the malicious urchin. "Booby-traps" were constantly set for her, in the shape of heavy books or jugs of water skilfully balanced on the top of the door of the Baroness's room, which was then left just ajar, and the bell hastily rung, so that, coming down-stairs and entering the apartment in a hurry, she was sure to get the benefit of the jug or books upon her devoted head. These tricks, however, were by no means his worst. The supposed young Baron, in his visits to the housekeeper's room, never missed the chance of paying attention to Martha's comfort after his own peculiar fashion. He put salt in her beer when her head was turned; slyly inserted needles in her bread, which more

than once proved nearly fatal to the woman ; and upon one occasion doctored her tea with some drugs which he had abstracted from his mother's medicine-chest, and which produced serious and most unpleasant results. Not content with these practical jokes, the urchin never spared the feelings of anybody, and Martha was often-times almost goaded to madness by his insulting remarks upon her personal appearance, disposition, and situation in life. As time went on, matters seemed to get rather worse than better, and the wretched woman experienced to her cost that revenge, sweet as it may be, cannot be purchased without a heavy sacrifice.

While these things were passing in the castle of Bandelboots, the question may not unnaturally be asked of me what had become of the real child, the unfortunate young Hubert, who had been carried away by the river-demon. It may easily be supposed that his was no pleasant fate. Fortunately for him, those who had taken him from his happy home had no power either to kill or injure him, neither could they alter the goodness of his natural disposition. The latter, however, rendered his condition somewhat more uncomfortable than would otherwise have been the case, for being forced to consort with witches, demons, imps, and other low and disreputable society, he was constantly brought into contact with many things and people most disagreeable and revolting to anything pure and good. He was obliged to attend the "bad language class" of the water-imps, where prizes were given for swearing and wicked conversation ; the art of tormenting was taught him by an elderly demon, to whom the task was congenial ; and general instruction in devilry was afforded

him by means of public lectures delivered by a spirit specially appointed for the purpose. Such, however, was his natural goodness, that he steadily refused to be perverted, maintaining a dignified silence amid the jesting and ribaldry of the imps around, and invariably declining to join in any of their misconduct.

All that the demons could do, under the circumstances, was to alter, without permanently injuring, the form with which he had entered the world. This they did by giving to his well-shaped body the appearance of a round and ill-made bulk, upon which they placed a bullet-head with a pair of short horns over the forehead, and ornamented it, moreover, with a long tail and a pair of bat's wings. Thus being changed into a regular little devilet, it was marvellous that the boy should have continued to preserve the goodness and purity of his disposition. So it was, however; and as demons who live by tempting mortals to sin have a very large field over which to practise their skill, and cannot afford to devote to any one individual more than a fair share of their attention, they got tired after a while of trying it on with the young Baron, and ended by leaving him very much to himself. Then it was that the boy found amusement in flying about along the banks of the river.

By the mysterious laws of magic, he knew, and yet did not know, the misfortune which had befallen him, and the crime of which he had been made the victim. In other words, he knew that something was as it should not be, and that, somehow or other, he had been cruelly wronged, but of the exact nature of the wrong he was as yet ignorant. Still, some instinct led him to the lake in which was situated the island upon which stood his

father's castle, and he loved better than anything else to fly by night round and round the old place, uttering from time to time mournful cries, which now and then found their way to the ears of some of the Baron's household. Whenever the false heir heard these sounds,



The Devillet.

it was noticed that he shivered terribly, and crept, groaning and growling, under the nearest sofa, or anywhere out of sight. And upon one occasion, when the cry sounded louder and clearer than usual, and there came a noise as if a wing had flapped against the window of the state-room in which the family were assembled that evening, he howled miserably, threw himself upon the ground, and almost went into convulsions with alarm.

This behaviour on the part of his supposed son struck the Baron as strange, and was, indeed, the cause of some coldness between him and his wife. For, being a man somewhat proud of the chivalry and courage of his high ancestry, this display of cowardice on the part of

his probable heir and successor greatly irritated the old gentleman, and he boldly declared that he was sure it all came from the mother's side. Such an accusation naturally put the Baroness into one of her passions, in the course of which she went so far as to pull off her husband's wig and slap his cheeks. This indignity was one to which the Baron could scarcely be expected to submit, and having soundly shaken his respected consort, he left the room in high dudgeon, and took his meals alone for the next three days, which annoyed the Baroness more than anything else, as it left her only her daughters and servants to scold, which had become rather insipid. After a while this conduct of the child was set down to constitutional timidity, and the Baron only smiled contemptuously when it was repeated.

So time wore on, and it really seemed as if there was no reason why the truth should ever be discovered, or the success of Martha Schweinvolt's wicked scheme be otherwise than complete. It was not, however, wholly satisfactory to the waiting-maid herself, for, independently of the unpleasant behaviour of the false heir towards her, she had not even the satisfaction of seeing her mistress suffer as she had hoped. So it is that people who consult demons, or, what is nearly as bad, follow the dictates of their own evil passions, are generally deceived in the result, and find that the good to themselves which they expected to obtain pretty certainly ends in disappointment.

Although the Baroness had at first declared that the child brought to her by Sophie Grutchen on that eventful morning was not her own, she had become reconciled to the state of things in a marvellously

short time, fancied that, after all, she must have been under some delusion, and in a very few days took kindly to the infant. As he grew up, her fondness for him increased, and, in spite of what has been so often said and written about the unfailing instinct of a mother, she firmly believed him to be her own son. Instead, therefore, of her heart-strings being wrung, as Martha had charitably hoped would have been the case, she was by no means unhappy. True it is, she suffered somewhat from the urchin's behaviour, but, when it did not happen to affect her own personal comfort, she took his part against the complaints of others, stood up for him when the Baron found fault, and scarcely ever endeavoured to check him in his mischievous and tormenting ways.

Thus did Martha find that she had brought a plague upon herself without really securing her revenge, and that the only person who had been punished was the innocent child against whom she had borne no grudge. This was by no means a pleasant reflection, and in some natures would have produced a repentance for the evil done, and a sincere desire to undo it if possible. I regret to be obliged to state that this was by no means the case with Martha. On the contrary, her desire for revenge was unappeased, and the more she discovered that she had failed, the more she resolved that she would, somehow or other, ultimately succeed. With this view, therefore, she once more sought the river side, and summoned to her aid her former friend the water-demon.

As there was nothing attractive in her appearance, or delightful in her society, the demon, who knew

moreover that his hold upon her was sufficiently secure to make it a matter of indifference to him whether she committed any more crimes or not, did not come until she had adjured him by many entreaties and employed all the incantations of which she was the mistress. When at last he appeared, he treated her with contemptuous coldness, and derided her complaints that she had not enjoyed her promised revenge. In fact he told her, in so many words, that he had fulfilled his part of the bargain, and that she had no business to trouble him any more.

Most people would have taken this for a final answer, but Martha was not disposed to be put off after such a fashion. She told the demon that she was quite ready to own that he had done what he had promised, although the result had not been so satisfactory as she had been led to expect. She had, however, another plan, in which she required his assistance, and put it plainly to him, as a well-bred devil, whether he could refuse a lady under the peculiar circumstances of the case. Besides, she said, there would be crime committed by other persons, and possibly misery to many, if her plan could be carried out, and these should be powerful inducements to any right-minded demon, who understood the interests of his class, to render his willing and active assistance.

Her plan, then, was to stir up the neighbouring peasants and shepherds to revolt against the Baron. By constantly dinging into their ears stories of the lazy and useless life he led, and the abominable temper and tyranny of the Baroness, Martha had little doubt that a spirit of disaffection might be excited among these igno-

rant people which she would eventually be able to turn to good account. If she could induce them to rise against the Baron, and suddenly attack the castle, she would take good care that the Baroness should not escape; and even if the movement was not successful, she would be able in the confusion to wreak her revenge, by dagger or poison, upon her hated mistress. Such an attempt, in any case, could not fail to be productive of much evil and discomfort to one side or the other, and must, therefore, be a scheme which should at once recommend itself to the individual whom she was addressing.

The demon listened with attention to Martha's speech, and at its conclusion warmly complimented her upon the fertility of her brain, and expressed his candid opinion that she deserved to have been a demon herself. He owned that he felt bound, as a gentleman and a devil, to give her every assistance in his power, and asked her several questions as to the manner in which she thought he could be of most use in furthering her views. The waiting-maid replied that her only fear was as to her being able to persuade the people to take her advice and rise against the Baron. The old feudal principle still lurked in their breasts, and although they were certainly poor they were tolerably honest, and having been generally treated with kindness by the inhabitants of the castle, might possibly be weak enough to entertain towards them sentiments of affection and gratitude.

The demon, however, who knew better than Martha how little of either of these feelings exists in the heart of man, smiled a contemptuous smile at her ignorance of human nature, and told her that she need feel no

uneasiness upon the point. He added, however, that as she doubted her persuasive powers, he would give her such valuable aid as would materially improve her chances of success. He would forthwith speak to two highly respectable wehr-wolves of his acquaintance, who would be ready, for his sake, to accompany her whenever she went out among the peasants. By following her closely, these animals would add to the estimation in which the ignorant rustics would hold her, and although they would not speak when she was in the company of other mortals, they would give her many private hints which she would find immeasurably useful in persuading those with whom she would have to do.

Much gratified by this assurance, Martha wended her way homewards in better spirits than she had enjoyed for some time past, and was even able to smile contemptuously when she found that the young Baron had taken the opportunity of her absence to put a hedgehog in her bed, and empty a bottle of castor oil into her best Sunday boots. She lost no time in commencing operations, and almost every afternoon walked out into the country to spread disaffection among the people.

At first, it is true, she was rather frightened at the appearance of the wehr-wolves, whom the demon had been as good as his word in sending to meet her. They always waited for her at the corner of a neighbouring wood, and accompanied her to the cottages of the peasants. After a short time she began to hold small meetings of the latter, at which she held forth concerning the wrongs they suffered at the hands of the Baron: how shameful it was that *he* should be so rich and *they* so poor, and how one man was just as good as another.

She always took care to wind up by attributing much of their particular miseries to the bad influence of the Baroness, whom she denounced as an upholder of everything bad, a cruel tyrant in her household, and altogether a monster of iniquity. As she lectured in this way, one of the wehr-wolves generally sat just behind her and the other at the other end of the room, and the presence of these animals made a vast impression upon the ignorant peasants. In this manner, little by little, the wicked Martha obtained considerable influence over the poor



Martha rousing the Peasants.

people, who became gradually more and more moody and discontented, until at last they really came to look upon the Baron as a hateful tyrant, and regarded the Baroness as a monster in human form.

While all these things were going on, you must not suppose, Brother Thames, that evil was allowed to enjoy an uninterrupted triumph in Rhineland. I am glad to be able to say that such has never been the case for long; and that although my stream has always been more or less troubled by demons, imps, devilets, and

water-rats (which are nearly as bad), it has never been without a redeeming element in the shape of good fairies, nymphs, and an occasional stray mermaid, come up from the sea for change of air and scenery. These creatures have, from time to time, performed many acts of kindness to mankind, and when the powers of evil have proved too strong for them for a time, they have now and then requested me to interfere.

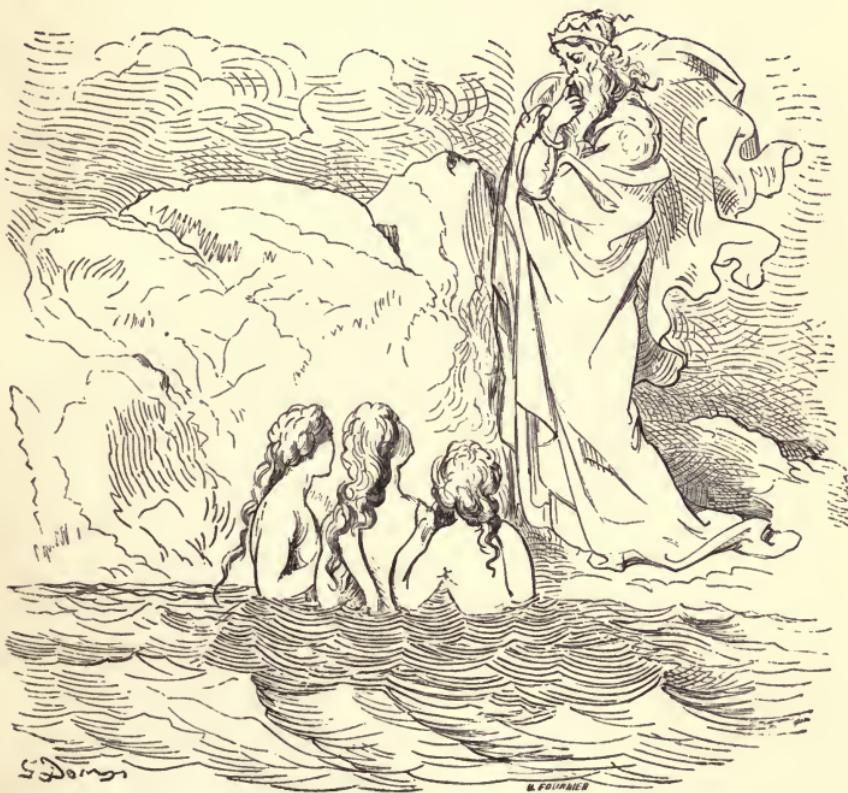
In the present instance a strong deputation of nymphs waited upon me, and brought before me a particular part of the case which I am now about to enter upon. Among those persons who were most greatly plagued by the false heir, were his three supposed sisters, the elder children of the Baron and Baroness von Bandelboots. These young ladies were endowed with considerable personal attractions, and were girls of whom a brother might well have been proud. Dora, Bertha, and Elladine were the names of the three, and up to the time of the changing of the children they had lived lives as happy and contented as was compatible with the ever-varying temper of their worthy mother. They were quite young, indeed, when the event occurred which so destroyed the comfort of the Bandelboots household, and at the time at which I have now arrived in my narration were just budding into womanhood, three as fair flowers as you would wish to see. Their young devilet of a brother, or rather he who was supposed to be their brother, contrived to make their existence perfectly miserable; and as the Baroness invariably took his part against them, their lives at last became positively unendurable.

It was not only that a chignon was constantly hidden

or stolen just when it was wanted, stays were mysteriously cut, gloves spoiled, best bonnets crammed up the chimney, and best boots deposited in the bath. These discomforts were unpleasant enough, but the little wretch went far beyond them. He pinched and nipped the poor girls whenever he met them, trod on their toes suddenly, drew away their chairs just as they were about to sit down, and put rhubarb and magnesia into their five o'clock tea. Moreover, he carried all kinds of tales about them to the Baroness, and told falsehood upon falsehood for the mere purpose of getting them into disgrace. Then, when the Baroness inflicted punishment upon them, he would jeer and taunt and tease the poor girls, rendering it doubly disagreeable by his ill-natured and malicious joy. Nothing delighted him so much as to see others suffer, and it seemed as if he lived for nothing else save to procure as much misery as possible for his neighbours.

This state of things gradually drove Dora, Bertha, and Elladine to desperation ; and, after many plans and consultations, they determined to seek advice from some of the good spirits of my river. As it happened, however, that, although they are very willing to give good advice and to assist mortals whenever they can, my nymphs and fairies are restrained by etiquette from active interference with the demons in those parts of the river especially appropriated to the latter, the good creatures thought it better to bring the matter before me ; and on being consulted by the young ladies, the nymph who saw them upon the subject told them to come again at a certain time, before which she waited upon me, as I have said, with a deputation.

When the case had been fairly represented to me, I saw at once that it was one in which something should be done, and I accordingly promised that if the three young persons would bathe together at a certain spot



Father Rhine and the three Baronesses.

on the following morning, I would present myself before them and hear their story.

The time came, and I can assure you, Brother Thames, that in order to inspire confidence in the breasts of the maidens, I made my appearance as venerable as I could previous to my appearance before their astonished eyes.

The sweet creatures stood in the water clinging fondly to each other, as they implored my assistance; and whilst I listened to their artless tale of woe, I leaned my head upon my hand, and pondered deeply over the best course to be taken in order to afford them that assistance which I at once determined to render.

I was not long in making up my mind, and in resolving that the demons should not be allowed to have things all their own way. However, as you know very well, the laws of magic must not be broken, and it would never have done for me to have rudely and suddenly exercised my superior power in order to set matters right in the castle of Bandelboots. All I could fairly do was to put mortals in the way of helping themselves, at the same time interfering, if need should arise, with just as much exercise of power as might be necessary. So, having spoken words of comfort to the three girls, I told them to go home and try and bear their misfortunes for three days more, and at the end of that time, if matters were no better, they might again pay me a visit.

There was, as you may suppose, no improvement in their condition during the appointed time. In fact, their supposed brother was, if possible, rather worse than ever. He cut off a great bit of Bertha's back hair, stole up behind Elladine and boxed her ears violently, and finished up by giving Dora's pet canary to the cat, which he afterwards hung, as he said, for the murder. It was no matter of surprise to me, then, when the three maidens again presented themselves before me, weeping bitterly over their many misfortunes and sorrows.

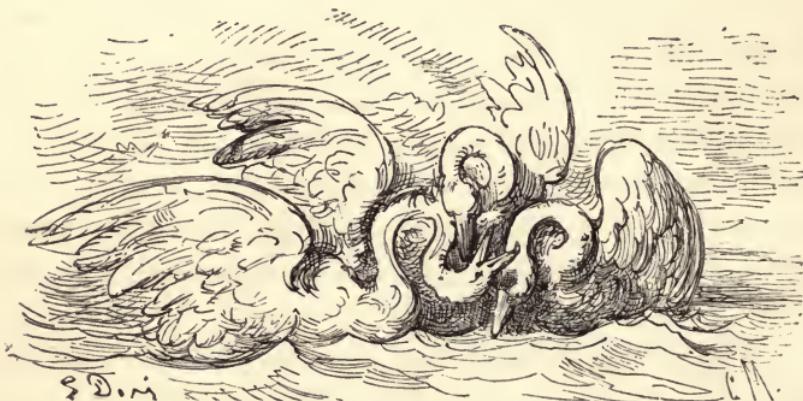
I no longer hesitated as to the course which I should

pursue, but immediately changed the sisters into three magnificent swans, desiring them to frequent as much as possible the lake on which their father's castle stood. This course, as you will readily perceive, had a double effect of a most useful character. For one thing, it of course showed the inhabitants of the castle that something was wrong, and aroused both the Baron and Baroness to exertions for the recovery of their lost daughters which would very likely result in their finding out from the powers of magic something, as the lawyers say, "very much to their advantage." But above and beyond this was the circumstance that, as swans are gifted with the miraculous power of seeing through magical disguises, the young ladies would be perfectly certain to encounter and recognise their real brother in some of his flittings over the lake, and thus would eventually be brought about the consummation so devoutly to be desired.

You may well believe that the disappearance of the three girls plunged the castle into the direst confusion. No one could imagine where they had gone to, and all kinds of surmises were afloat. The Baron smoked twice as many pipes as usual; the Baroness flew into a more violent passion than had been the case for a month before; poor old nurse Grutchen wept bitterly; Martha Schweinvolt seemed to have more vinegar than ever in her countenance; and the false heir ran about teasing and worrying everybody twice as much as usual, and was apparently in the highest possible spirits at the loss of his sisters. Every hole and corner of the castle was searched, the river was dragged, the crier was sent through the straggling hamlets of the neighbourhood,

special messengers were despatched in every direction, but it is needless to say that no success attended any of these proceedings.

And the stately swans swam all the time around the ancient walls of their ancestral home, and floated upon the waters of the lake they knew so well, thankful for the peace and rest which they at last enjoyed, and caressing each other with the tender love of creatures who knew that upon their mutual love and sympathy



The Swan-sisters.

depended the whole comfort and happiness of their lives. Nor indeed were they long left in ignorance of the truth as to their unhappy brother. Scarcely had they been two days upon the old lake, before the transformed child came flying up from the river to take his mournful look at the home from which he had been so cruelly ravished. As he flew low over the waters he passed close to the three lovely swans, and they, casting their eyes upon him as they sat mournfully watching, recognised their brother at once through the hideous

disguise he wore, and called him to them with loud cries of joy.

The bat-boy paused in his flight, hovered for a moment near to the noble birds, and then, as he heard them speak, the whole of his sad story came back to him, the memories of his first few months upon earth as a mortal child were stirred in his bosom, and he knew clearly and fully his true nature and origin, and the cruel wrongs he had endured at the hands of the treacherous waiting-maid and her wicked ally the river-demon. As soon as he had fully realised the truth, the boy tenderly embraced his swan-sisters, and the four wept together over the sorrows of their family. Being well aware, however, that weeping would be of very little service unless followed by active measures, they discontinued that amusing pastime after a while, and consulted together as to the best course to be pursued.

Although comparatively happy in their new shape, the sisters readily confessed that they should infinitely prefer to resume their human bodies, provided that they could be assured of being able to live quietly and comfortably, and of being no longer troubled with the malice of the devilet heir. The youthful Hubert had of course no affection whatever for the form to which *he* had been condemned, and therefore the object of the four was clear enough, namely, to return to their natural shapes as soon as possible under more favourable conditions than those in which they had left them. The question was as to the wisest and best means of securing this desirable object, and here the magic knowledge generally possessed by swans came to their assistance.

They knew full well that their brother could never become his former self until the devilet who now possessed his shape and claimed rights which were his should be compelled to abandon both. They knew, moreover, that to bring this about would be a work requiring caution, since the river-demon was powerful and cunning enough to counteract all their efforts unless they could contrive to outwit him. It was, however, revealed to the sisters that there was one way in which this might be done, and by which the retransformation of their brother might be effected, and the false heir be obliged to return to him that sent him.

There lived far up in the great mountains, which could be seen in the distance from the castle windows, a being endowed with wondrous powers. He was commonly known by the name of the Harper, and a strange fellow he certainly was. No one quite knew whether he was merely mortal or something more. All that was certain was, that he lived the life of a hermit, was by no means particular in his dress or remarkably clean in his appearance, and wore a flat hat with ivy and oak leaves woven together on the crown. His harp was of the rudest and simplest character, but it had such extraordinary virtue that if he played it, accompanying himself while he sang or chanted to its tune, everybody and everything seemed obliged to yield to its magic powers. The sisters of Bandelboots knew full well that if this individual's aid could be secured things would be pretty sure to go right, and therefore made up their minds to seek it without delay.

That night nothing could be done ; the swans brooded quietly on the lake, and their brother flitted mournfully

round the castle, uttering his melancholy cries, and hovering close to the windows of the home that should have been his. But early next morning the three swans rose from the water and took their flight towards the great mountains. Upwards and upwards they flew, pausing not for one moment's rest, until they had crossed the river, passed over the large forest beyond, and reached the steep rocks and crags amid which the Harper had his home. There was snow on the heights, and the poor birds felt the chill strike through their warm plumage to their tender breasts as they flew higher and higher. Suddenly they came to a small grove of trees which grew on a platform of flat land, which was curiously placed just beneath one of the highest crags. At the extremity of this was a cave hollowed out in the rock, and in this cave dwelt the worthy Harper, only coming forth to the world below when specially summoned for some purpose beneficial to weak and suffering humanity.

Alighting at the mouth of the cave, the three sisters began to sing their sweetest song, which not unnaturally brought the owner of the cave out to see what was the matter. This his knowledge of magic soon enabled him to ascertain, and it is hardly necessary that I should give you the details of the interview. Suffice it to say that when they parted the worthy old gentleman nodded his head and winked his eyes knowingly at the young ladies, as much as to assure them that it would be "all right," and that the three swans flew back to the lake exceedingly well satisfied with the result of their expedition.

Meanwhile, Martha Schweinvolt had very nearly

brought her plans to maturity. The peasantry had become thoroughly discontented, and were prepared to take action against the family whom they had been taught to regard as their oppressors. Martha's desire was that they should surprise the castle by a sudden assault, she on her part undertaking that one of the gates should be unfastened when they arrived, and only stipulating that, if success attended their attempt, the Baroness should be delivered up to her mercy. The chief difficulty was in the means of transit, for the castle, being upon an island, could not easily be attacked except the latter were first reached by its assailants.

At one side the island was very near the mainland, from which a strip of land jutted out into the lake, and a large wooden bridge connected the two. This was the ordinary means of approach; and as a strong gate was placed at the island end of the bridge, over which a sentinel always watched, it was not very easy for any considerable body of men to cross over without their coming being made known to the inhabitants of the castle. Martha, however, was equal to the occasion. She managed to make friends with the sentinel on the night for which the attack was planned, and having induced him to abandon his post for a time, gave him a cup of tea so well drugged that he was quite unable to return there. The effect upon this man, I may here mention, was a melancholy one. From thenceforth he eschewed tea for ever, and took to drinking ale and spirits for the rest of his life, which should be a warning to all persons to take care what they put into their tea, and by whom they allow themselves to be tempted to partake of that usually refreshing beverage.

Having thus obtained possession of the key, Martha stole out and unlocked the bridge-gate, and returned to the castle delighted with her success. Once on the little island, the invaders of the castle would have little difficulty. The drawbridge was left down, the doors generally left open, and such was the security of the Baron in those peaceful days, that no precautions, further than guarding the bridge-gate, were ever taken against surprise. Besides the servants, there were not above five-and-twenty men-at-arms in the castle; and as several hundred peasants were likely to attack, there could be little doubt of the result, provided always that the surprise was as complete as Martha intended.

The night was clear and moonlight when the attacking party drew near. They were a strange-looking body of men, rudely and poorly clad, and armed with weapons of a varied and curious character. Some had clubs, some stakes sharpened at the points, some knives, daggers, and oddly fashioned swords, whilst not a few had only spades or prongs, and some appeared unprovided with any weapons save those which nature had given them. They crossed the bridge without opposition, found to their delight that the gate was open, passed quietly through it, and got safely upon the island. They advanced to the drawbridge, crossed it, and had nothing to do but to enter the doors beyond, and find themselves inside the castle.

The family had passed a somewhat unpleasant day. The Baron had taken deeply to heart the loss of his daughters, of whom he had become more than usually fond since his supposed son had shown himself of such a disagreeable character. The latter had been that day

more mischievous and troublesome than ever: as the Baroness had a headache, he had amused himself with making as much noise as he possibly could, and had, moreover, indulged his passion for practical jokes by putting live toads into the maid-servants' beds, and turning the ink-bottle into the Baron's after-dinner decanter of port wine. The household not having been rendered more comfortable or harmonious by these innocent pastimes of the pretended Hubert, were about to retire to rest, when the sudden arrival of the insurgent peasants gave them something else to think of.

As soon as they were well inside the doors, the attacking party kept silence no longer, but, with loud shouts, began their work of plunder. The defenders of the castle were really so completely surprised, that resistance was almost impossible. The trembling servants hid themselves wherever they could—the groom of the chamber shutting himself up securely in the housemaid's closet, the housekeeper flying instantly to the butler's pantry, and the latter functionary betaking himself immediately to the beer-cellar, from which he was with difficulty dragged when the affair was over, but was never the same man afterwards. The men-at-arms, I am sorry to say, did but little better. Utterly bewildered at the whole business, they made no attempt at resistance until it was too late, and within a very short time the castle was in the hands of the invaders.

As soon as the Baron heard the first outcry he rang the bell loudly, and, as nobody answered, presently repeated the performance, with a precisely similar result. He had been just about to retire to rest, but finding that

the uproar increased, and that something serious had certainly happened, he desisted from the act of pulling off his boots, seized his sword, and rushed down into the large state-room, where he was presently joined by some eight or ten of the men-at-arms and two or three of the household servants. As soon as he found that the castle had been attacked; and was actually in possession of an enemy, the Baron gnashed his teeth with rage at having been thus caught unprepared; but, being a man of courage, despite his natural laziness, determined to sell his life dearly at the least. He and his few retainers had just time to barricade the door at one end of the room, and place the large library-table and some other articles of furniture in such a position as to give them a better chance of self-defence if attacked by numbers, when the doors at the other end of the room were thrown violently open, and a crowd of peasants rushed in, yelling and bawling in loud and discordant tones as they advanced towards the master of the castle. It was at this moment that the old blood of the Bandelboots showed itself to advantage. The Baron displayed no signs of fear, but, drawing himself up to his full height (which, being barely four feet six inches, was of itself not imposing), and violently stamping his foot upon the floor, he thus addressed the intruders:—

“How now, varlets! Whence and for what object come ye here? How do ye dare, ye scum of the earth, to enter your Baron’s castle and beard a Bandelboots in his lair?”

Then stepped there forth a tattered, ragged, famished-looking man, well known in those parts by the name of Crazy Timothy; his eyes were wild and staring, his

dress torn, and his whole appearance seemed amply to justify his nickname.

“ We want our rights ! ” he cried in a loud voice. “ What is a Bandelboots to us more than anybody else ? We are starving, whilst you and your vile Baroness revel in plenty. Give us our rights—these are the days when the poor are as good as the rich ! No more starvation for the poor peasant ! Give us our rights ! ”



Crazy Timothy.

And thereupon the whole crew took up the chorus. “ Our rights ! our rights ! — give us our rights ! ” and made as though they would advance upon the old Baron. The latter quailed not for a moment, but, curling his lips scornfully, thus made reply :—

“ Rights ? But what are they ? Is it your rights to enter a peaceful dwelling and rob its owner ? If these are your rights, why are they *yours* more than the rights of all the rest of the world ? What better title have

you to your homes than I to mine ? And if you may enter and rob my castle, what protection has any one of you for his own cottage, which some one may say it is *his* right to enter and destroy ? Poor churls ! ye are deceived, and will but bring ruin upon yourselves. Retire before it is too late, and ye shall yet be pardoned ! ”

Whatever might have been the Baron’s intention in

uttering these words, I am sorry to say that they had no conciliatory effect upon those to whom they were addressed. Shouting aloud and brandishing their weapons, they were about to advance upon the venerable nobleman, when, from a side door, some new personages suddenly appeared upon the scene. Pushed along in a chair upon wheels, to which she was securely bound, came the Baroness, in the custody of several peasants, who were under the more immediate guidance and control of Martha Schweinvolt. The latter, with a face beaming with delight, followed triumphantly behind, whilst the false heir, weeping and howling piteously, trotted by the side of the chair, driven forward by the peasants who ushered the Baroness into the room.

The poor Baroness presented a spectacle sad indeed to behold. She was in a towering rage, but at the same time perfectly helpless, and foamed at the mouth with fury as she strove in vain to get loose from the cords with which she was tied.

When these new arrivals had advanced into the room between the Baron and the peasants, there was a momentary pause, during which Martha stepped in front of the chair upon which the poor Baroness was fastened, and, pointing at her with outstretched arm and scornful gesture, addressed the peasants in these words :—

“Here she is, good people ; here is the source of all your ills—the cause of all your woes ! The poor fool of a Baron would do no harm but for this vile woman. See what a passion she is in now ! This is her usual temper ; and no wonder she is such a tyrant, and makes her husband the same !”

At this point the Baroness broke in, having previously vented her rage in sobs and incoherent shrieks. "Let me loose! let me loose!" she cried. "You riff-raff—you vagabonds—you traitors—let me loose directly! This wretched creature has deceived you all; she is a worthless, good-for-nothing hussy. Let me loose, or I vow you shall all be hanged!" And the Baroness shrieked for fury again, her temper being by no means improved by the false heir, who, despite all his fears for himself, seeing her securely tied, could not resist the temptation of giving her a fearful pinch in the fleshy part of the arm, for which a peasant instantly knocked him down.

Before Martha could speak again, the Baron, who was a good old chap in the main, roared out aloud: "By my grandfather's monument!" cried he (an oath all the more terrible from the edifice in question being well known to be the largest and ugliest of its kind for miles around); "this is past all bearing! Knaves! will ye list to the falsehoods of this base harridan, who has eaten our salt for years, and now wags her evil tongue against a kind, though perhaps somewhat hasty, mistress? Never has the Baroness said a word against one of ye. *My* faults, whatever they be, are mine own, and for them *I* will answer. But what has the Baroness done? Who sends ye alms and food when sickness is amongst ye? Who helps your wives and children when trouble is in your homes? Who but the Baroness? And is *this* your gratitude?"

There was some truth in what the Baron now said, for his wife was by no means unkind to the poor, nor would they have readily turned against her but for the

wiles of Martha, assisted by the magical powers of the wehr-wolves. But Martha knew too well to let the Baron continue. She broke in upon his discourse with her shrill, sharp voice: "Hear the good man, my friends; he is right to stand up for his wife, no doubt, but he knows well that he is false to the truth. She is a wretch, a tyrant, a termagant! Yes, Madam the Baroness," she continued, coming close in front of the chair, and approaching her face much nearer to that of the poor lady than the latter deemed at all pleasant—"yes, your reign is at an end—do you hear, you old fright? Your back hair shall be pulled out; though, as it is nearly all false, it will cause you but little pain. Your nose shall be wrung!—your ears shall be slit!—and you shall serve *me*—do you hear? Oh, *you're* a pretty one to box a person's ears. I'll pay you out *now* for *that*, I'll warrant me!" And as she spoke she lifted up her arm, about to give the Baroness a box on the ears with her full force. But in the very act she paused—stopped—and stood trembling and irresolute, as if suddenly arrested by some superior power.

At the same moment, and apparently by the same influence, the peasants one and all felt themselves restrained from moving forwards, the Baroness ceased to scream, and a dead silence fell upon the whole of the party, whilst, with a low and miserable moan, the false heir crept behind the coal-scuttle, and crouched himself down within as small a compass as possible. The whole of this marvellous effect had apparently been produced by a very trifling cause. The low, tinkling sound of a harp was heard, and those who looked round in the right direction saw, standing in the embrasure of

one of the windows which looked out upon the lake, an old man of by no means noble or prepossessing exterior, with a leaf-crowned hat upon his head, and a harp of very simple construction in his hands, from the strings of which he elicited the sound they had heard, to which he now added that of his own voice. And thus he sang, in a dull, monotonous tone, to the astonished audience :—

“ Whoever murders, robs, and loots,
Within these walls of Bandelboots,
Must hear his doom and take his choice,
Instructed by the Harper’s voice.
Ye men of form and manners rough,
Old Bandelboots has woes enough,
The which when ye have heard and known
You’ll leave the worthy man alone.
To you and yours he’s done no harm,
But, subject to a potent charm,
Has suffered woes, by demon sent,
Enough to make your hearts relent.
T’ expose the wickedness be mine
(In spite of demons of the Rhine),
And ye who list shall know ere long
The truth and justice of my song.
There was an infant once, who smiled
On those around like angel child ;
A child of soul and temper rare—
Of Bandelboots the precious heir.
Where now that child is to be found,
Who knows ? I pause, and look around,
And ask if this description suits
The present heir of Bandelboots ?
What is that wretched changeling worth ?
Come forth, vile elf, at once come forth ! ”

Here the stranger paused, and, to the wonder and surprise of all those who heard and saw, the supposed young heir crept moaning and whining from behind the coal-scuttle, and shambled across the room towards the

window at which the old harper was standing. As he did so, the strange bard continued his song,—

“ Form of boy, with heart of ape,
Resume at once thy former shape ! ”

As he spoke, a strange transformation came at once over the wretched imp. His boyish shape disappeared ; a tail shot out where tails usually grow ; the wings of a bat sprang upon his shoulders ; his form became ugly and misshapen, and he stood before them all a regular devilet, and no mistake ! At the very same instant the window behind the harper flew open as if by magic, and in flew a figure similar to that before them, from which, however, the wings and tail dropped, the evil shape disappeared, and a handsome, well-proportioned boy, with a remarkably sweet expression upon his countenance, stood before the astonished party.



The Old Harper.

In an instant a shriek of joy was heard from the corner in which some of the trembling servants were assembled, and old nurse Grutchen rushed forward and threw herself upon the boy's neck with a burst of mingled sobs and laughter. “ My pet ! my darling ! my child ! ” she cried. “ It *is* you ! I know it is you ! Come to old Sophie then, my pearl of the world ; ” and again she shrieked with joy.

More wonders followed before any of the audience had recovered from their astonishment at what had already occurred. With a yell and a howl the devilet flew towards the window, his passage through which was mightily assisted by a hearty kick from the old harper, and he was seen no more. Scarcely, however, had he left the scene when the rushing of wings was heard, and three magnificent swans sailed through the window and alighted in the room, exactly in front of the old harper, to whom they looked up with longing and affectionate glances. The worthy man at once struck his harp again, and sang as follows:—

“ Old Bandelboots, as well ye wot,
 Had once three lovely daughters,
 For whom the place became too hot,
 Through imps from river waters.
 Then the Rhine King (a wondrous thing,
 Which needs some explanation)
 His aid did to the maidens bring,
 Gave each Swan’s plumage, neck, and wing,
 And caused their transformation.
 Now here the three together be
 (Performed their destined duties),
 And I decree they shall be free
 Once more. Arise, my beauties ! ”

As he ceased speaking the feathers fell off from the three swans, their beaks changed into beautiful noses, their forms became those of lovely young ladies, and Dora, Bertha, and Elladine once more stood in their proper shapes before their surprised and delighted parents.

Whilst this had been going on, the youthful Hubert, making one bound forward, sprang to his mother’s chair, and, seizing a dagger from the hand of a be-

wildered peasant, set her free in an instant. Upon this the Baroness, overcome by mingled emotions of joy and wonder, wept upon her boy's neck, and the old harper thus continued, addressing himself emphatically to the crowd of peasants before him :—

“ Poor knaves ! who quake and shake with fear,
O'erwhelmed with terror and with shame,
The powers of evil lured ye here :
Theirs and not yours, the chiefest blame.
Hence ! fly ! be off ! your injured lord
For this day's work will pardon give :
For him I speak this kindly word :
To-day he knows his children live.
Begone, I say ! and, as to wrongs,
Yours are but small ; the fiends beshrew ye
If e'er ye listen to false tongues
Which lie about your masters to ye !
Be each contented with his lot—
Both rich and poor this world containeth ;
But let this truth be ne'er forgot—
O'er rich and poor 'tis God that reigneth ;
Nor is full happiness e'er given
To mortal man this side of heaven.”

He spoke, and, as he concluded, the peasants, half frightened and half ashamed, began to steal away by twos and threes at a time, until none of them were left behind. The Baron, who had listened with the utmost attention to the words of the old harper, now stepped forward and tenderly embraced his daughters, after which he clasped his recovered boy to his heart, and vowed that upon that joyous day no one should be punished, and even the treacherous peasants who had invaded his castle should be freely forgiven.

The Baroness fell weeping on her husband's heart, loudly bewailed her own infirmity of temper, and vowed that she would never fly into a passion again. At this

the Baron, whilst her face was hidden upon his shoulder, slowly elevated his right hand, placed his forefinger horizontally against the side of his nose, and winked knowingly at his daughters.

Presently the Baroness raised her head, and, in tones of some feeling, asked what had become of that wretched Martha, gnashing her teeth as she spoke with an air that inspired considerable doubts as to her being able to keep her new resolution. This, however, was not put to the test as far as Martha was concerned. As soon as she perceived that things were going wrong, but that the harper was not alluding to *her* in his verse, that worthy person slipped quietly from the room and the castle, and sought refuge in the wood where her wehr-wolves usually met her. The animals were there as at other times, but their reception of her was not the same. No sooner was she within the wood than the expression of their countenances grew strange and fierce, so that the woman trembled all over. In another instant they seized upon her and dragged her, one on each side, near to where the wood touched the banks of the river. Wildly she shrieked for aid, and in another moment the form of the River-demon appeared upon the bank. This time, however, he had no cheering counsel to give. With a wild and derisive laugh he pointed jeeringly at the unhappy woman, whom the wehr-wolves held fast, while they growled fearfully and savagely all the while.

“Ha, Martha!” he cried, “hast thou come to the end of thy revenge at last? They who seek demon-help must have demon-punishment, and thine hour is come to-day. Know this, poor wretch! that those who yield to their passions cherish within them that which will

one day tear and destroy them as the wehr-wolves are about to do to thee, and those who wish for a happy end must control and govern themselves on the journey!" Then, with a fiendish leer and grin, he nodded his head to the wehr-wolves, and in another moment the wretched Martha was torn limb from limb, and perished miserably. Folks say that her spirit still haunts that wood, and that on dark and stormy nights her shrieks may be heard, accompanied by the growling of the wehr-wolves and the laugh of the exulting demon. But you and I, Brother Thames, know well how foolish mortals are with their tales of horror, and how ready they are to mistake a creaking tree for a shriek and a moonbeam for a spirit.

I have nothing more to say except that when the Baron and Baroness turned round to bless the old harper for his kindly aid, they saw nothing where he had been standing save the light of the sweet, pale moon shining in through the window. The harper had gone without waiting to be thanked, and they saw him no more. From thenceforth no spirits troubled the Bandel-boots family, save when the Baron took an extra glass of brandy, which occasionally flew to his toe. The Baroness decidedly improved in temper, profiting by the example of her son, who grew up to be one of the most sweet-tempered and agreeable young noblemen that ever lived upon the banks of my river. Of the three girls, I can only say that as they made excellent daughters and capital sisters, they succeeded equally well when they entered upon the cares and joys of matrimony, and no women, married or single, were more often toasted in good Steinburgh than the three famous

beauties, the swan-like daughters of the Baron von Bandelboots.

Father Rhine here ceased, and as soon as he had done so Father Thames struck a tremendous blow upon the table and vowed that the story he had just heard was one of the best that had ever been told. "I wish, however," said he, "that you could have told us a little more upon one or two points, Brother Rhine. It would be satisfactory to know that the rascally little scamp of a devilet was well punished when he got home; but I suppose you know not whether such was the case or what became of him afterwards?"

"No," Brother Thames, gravely replied the monarch of the Rhine, "I know not; and in fact I have always kept as much as possible aloof from the demons of my river, only showing them that ordinary civility which is rendered necessary by my position. I have little doubt, however, that the imp had misery enough in his future existence. No one who habitually annoys and injures others can ever have any real happiness himself, and, whether imp or mortal, unkindness and malice always recoil upon those who practise the one and are influenced by the other."

"Certainly," remarked Father Thames, "your words are true. But what became of the Baroness? Did she outlive the Baron, and was he cured of his laziness as well as she of her bad temper?"

"Brother," said his companion in an expostulating tone, "you really ask more than I can recollect. There are very many castles in the vicinity of my river, and to remember the details of the family history of all their

inhabitants is more than even I, as a river monarch, can venture to undertake. I may, however, safely say that the Baroness died before the Baron, for I happen to be able to recall the circumstances of her death. She was inordinately fond of dried cherries, and would insist upon swallowing the stones. For some time this had no effect, but at last she was taken ill and died of a disease so mysterious that they determined to have her body opened, when no less than two hundred and forty-six cherry-stones were found inside her."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Father Thames in great surprise. "But now tell me what happened to the Baron."

"I must positively decline," answered the other. "A legend is a legend, and I have told you mine. It is now your turn, and I hope you will lose no time, for I expect the Rhone, the Danube, and the Seine upon a matter of business to-morrow, and shall be late for my appointment if we waste our time in unnecessary talking."

"All right, brother," shouted Father Thames, and, clearing his throat, began without further delay the story of—

The Family Feud.

The Baron Simon de Guerre-à-mort (whose name, considerably transformed by his Saxon neighbours, was familiarly rendered as "Old Grammar") was an individual who, not to belie the said name, was of a somewhat warlike disposition. His ancestors had come over to these peaceful shores with "Billy the Norman, that very great war-man," as the old song calls him, and

very great war-men had *they* been also from the time of their first arrival. They warred against the Saxons as long as the latter showed fight; then they warred with their brother barons; then they went to the crusades; afterwards they joined Simon de Montfort in his gallant struggle for English liberties; they had a turn at the Welsh at one time, and took their share in the Scotch wars at another; in short, wherever and whenever opportunity for fighting offered itself, the Guerre-à-mort family or its representative eagerly seized it and rushed into the thickest of the battle as cheerfully as a duck into water. Nor was the Baron Simon one whit behind his ancestors in this respect. On the contrary, he was as ready for war as any of them, and fully maintained the character and traditions of his house.

In the days of which I write it was very much the fashion for great families to indulge in the luxury of hereditary foes, and a feud of long standing between this and that ancient house was such a customary thing that a nobleman who lived peaceably with all his neighbours was regarded as a slow kind of fellow, whose acquaintance was hardly worth having. There were generally wars of greater or less magnitude going on either within England herself or with some foreign enemy, which, one would have imagined, might have furnished sufficient employment to the fighting nobility of the day: This, however, was by no means the case; and though private feuds were sometimes left in abeyance for a time, when something more attractive in the way of battle and bloodshed happened to offer, yet they were never allowed to slumber

too long, and were invariably revived as soon as more peaceful times permitted their proprietors to indulge their private feelings and natural love of quarrelling.

The hereditary enemy of Simon de Guerre-à-mort was the house of St. Aunay, which, like his own, had been first known in England after the Battle of Hastings had flooded the country with Norman nobility, and which was at the moment of which we speak represented by Count Horace as the head of its race. It is difficult to say why or wherefore these two families should have been at variance, since there was no apparent reason for such a state of things. Their castles were upon opposite sides of my dear old river, at no great distance, though neither of them within sight of it. Their lands stretched down to my waters, which formed a reasonable and proper boundary, and there was consequently none of that intermingling of field with field or farm with farm which has in all ages proved a fertile source of unpleasantness between neighbouring landed proprietors. Moreover, the two noblemen had never brushed against each other or differed materially upon any public matters. In fact there was no probability of their doing so; for Baron Simon was at this time the wrong side of sixty by several years, whilst Count Horace had not lived half the years which constitute that respectable age. No: it was a good, respectable old family feud, and I verily believe that it was more from family feeling than for any other reason that it was still cherished by both houses.

It was, according to my firm belief, entirely in consequence of their private differences that, when the

wars of the Roses broke out, the two Norman noblemen took different sides, the Count of St. Aunay standing forward boldly for the House of York, whilst the Lord of Guerre-à-mort was Lancastrian to the backbone. As the latter was a leader of great repute, and could muster around his standard no inconsiderable number of retainers, he might probably have rendered great service to the cause he had espoused if he had acted with those well-known men who led its armies and managed its councils. But the Baron greatly preferred going his own way and fighting “for his own hand ;” and as soon as the country was well into the war, and everybody was harassing and worrying everybody else as much as they could, he determined that by far the best thing he could do to aid Henry of Lancaster was to cross the river and demolish the Castle of St. Aunay. Accordingly, he collected his forces, summoned his vassals and friends from all quarters and prepared for the expedition.

I remember, as well as if it were but yesterday, when the Baron’s army was halted along my banks preparatory to their crossing the river early on the following morning. The old chieftain himself, mounted on his powerful black charger, from whose eyes and nostrils the fire of war seemed to stream forth as he impatiently pawed the ground, rode out upon a hill above his troops, and gazed upon the scene before him. The moon was rising behind the distant hills, the evening was calm and still; but the heavens were cloudy, and strange lights from time to time darted across the sky, as if presaging the days of war and bloodshed which were about to come upon unhappy England. The old Baron



was completely armed, and his long, straggling beard fell down upon his horse's mane before him as he sat erect in his saddle. I saw him elevate his mighty sword and shield, raising each arm on high as he looked with flashing eye and threatening gesture upon the country upon the other side of the river, and then and there he vowed a solemn vow that before he re-crossed the Thames the Castle of St. Aunay should be sacked, his pride lowered, and his banner trailed in the dust. On high he shook his weapon as he took the oath, and full well I knew that the proud Norman would not fail to keep it, unless his foeman (who was probably taking an oath of a similar character about the same time) should have strength or cunning enough to prevent its accomplishment.

But before I proceed any further with my story I am bound to introduce you to a person who, as you will soon perceive, is the main cause and reason why I have any story at all to tell. The Baron de Guerre-à-mort had an only daughter. As, from the beginning of time, it has been the constant habit of maidens similarly circumstanced to fall in love with the person most objectionable to their respected father, Mathilde de Guerre-à-mort formed no exception to this most natural and reasonable rule. As a matter of course, she was desperately attached to Horace de St. Aunay, who, for his part, having fallen head over ears in love with her at their first interview, remained in the same condition with unwearied resolution. How they first came to meet I cannot say. One would have supposed that there would have been difficulties, considering the hostility existing between the two families ; but the young lady's mother

having been dead for many years, she enjoyed more liberty than was common to females of her rank and age in those days, and probably met the Count in some of her country rambles after birds' nests, violets, or blackberries—three things which all young people who have lived much in the country find more or less attractive at certain seasons of the year. However this may be, it is certain that these two individuals met, took a mutual fancy to each other, and would, in all human probability, have been thought by their friends to have been exactly suited, had it not been for the highly respectable feud of which I have already spoken.

The Baron, who had not the remotest idea of the state of the case, grieved and afflicted his daughter beyond measure by the manner in which he abused her lover upon every possible occasion. Mathilde, poor girl, bore it all with exemplary fortitude, although she invariably endeavoured to turn the conversation into more pleasant channels. But when the matter went beyond words, and her father actually commenced to make preparations to invade his enemy's country and destroy his castle, the agony of the poor young lady can be more easily imagined than described. She came down each morning with eyes red from crying all through the night; she grew daily paler and paler; lost her appetite; could scarcely take her five o'clock tea; sat with her hands before her, doing nothing; and burst out into hysterical fits of sobbing upon the slightest provocation. This sad condition of his daughter troubled the worthy baron not a little, and, naturally attributing it to any and every cause but the right one, he determined to try what change of air would do for her, and accordingly sent her to stay

with his sister, who was the superior of a convent in Reading. Here it was his hope that the society of the nuns would cheer the sweet damsel and restore her spirits, whilst the change of air and scenery might benefit her health. There were those, indeed, including her faithful old Saxon nurse Elfreda, who declared that the conversation of nuns was, as a rule, anything but enlivening, and Reading by no means particularly healthy or reinvigorating ; but as nobody dared question the Baron's superior wisdom upon every subject, nothing was said against his plan, and Mathilde de Guerre-à-mort was safely transmitted to and domesticated in the convent just before the expedition against her lover's castle was undertaken by her respected parent.

Horace de St. Aunay, although he received warning of the coming attack, was by no means in a condition to offer such resistance as he could have wished. The Lancastrians were by far the stronger party in his neighbourhood, and the Baron's forces greatly outnumbered his own. I need not dwell upon the particulars of the events which followed. The Guerre-à-mort army crossed the river, defeated the levies of St. Aunay in a skirmish on the plain, and drove them in every direction before their victorious advance. Horace de St. Aunay, wounded by an arrow, was reported killed, and it was impossible to rally his people under another leader. The haughty Baron had it all his own way ; he plundered the farmyards, raised a bonfire of what he didn't want to carry away, and made himself as unpleasant as possible to the harmless population, who, naturally and properly enough, no doubt, always have to suffer for the whims and quarrels of the great. He

next marched upon the Castle of St. Aunay, but found that it was deserted, and, having by that time had enough of burning and plundering for a time, contented himself with throwing down the big gates, breaking a few windows, and flaunting his own banner over the highest turret. Then, having collected all his booty, he turned homewards, and, having satisfied his private grudge against his neighbour, felt his interest in the Lancastrian cause wonderfully lessened, and began to want his daughter back again.

She, poor girl, had passed by no means a happy time in her convent, where the good nuns devoutly prayed for the Lancastrians, and especially for her worthy father, upon every possible opportunity, and where she never had a chance of hearing any news of her lover, or of saying a kind word for him or any other of his party. At last, one day, the lady superior informed her with an air of triumph that news had come of the defeat of St. Aunay's people by her father, and that the Count had been killed in the battle. The poor girl turned deadly pale, and swooned away at this intelligence. Fortunately for her, the Lady Superior, being a person of extraordinary intelligence, knew at once that such a result must certainly have been produced by Mathilde's alarm for her father's safety, and gratitude for his success. Having therefore taken the usual means to recover her from her fainting fit, the good lady loudly praised her filial affection, and held her up to the rest of the sisterhood as an example worthy of imitation, Mathilde thought it best to receive these compliments without taking any steps to alter the opinion of her worthy relative, but her suspense and anxiety were

very great, and all the more so from the fact that the difficulty of obtaining news of an authentic character was so considerable, that in all probability it would be weeks, and perhaps months, before she learned for certain whether her beloved Horace was alive or dead.

Days rolled on—days of miserable uncertainty, which was scarcely removed by a missive from her noble sire, which informed her indeed of the triumph of his arms, but at the same time only casually mentioned that the head of the rival house of St. Aunay had received a blow from which he would never recover. Now, it was obvious that this might be interpreted in two ways—either that the young Count had been grievously wounded in body, or that the fortunes of his house had been seriously injured. The latter was undoubtedly the case; but was the former also true? In this state of things uncertainty became madness, and Mathilde felt herself almost driven to desperation. This, however, being a condition of mind hardly suitable to a Norman lady of rank, she determined not to give way to it, but to take measures to relieve her anxiety. She resolved that she would, if possible, leave the convent and obtain, somehow or other, tidings of the being whom she so tenderly loved. It was not, however, in those days, a very easy thing to leave convents just when you pleased. If you were rich and well born, you could enter these institutions with but little difficulty; but quitting them was a different question altogether. Nor do I believe Mathilde would have accomplished her purpose had she not chanced to have a great friend in a worthy person who carried on the trade of a washerwoman in the town, and was fortunate enough to have secured the

convent custom. Being devoted to the Guerre-à-mort family, and especially so to the young Baroness, this worthy woman agreed to smuggle her out of the convent in a large basket of dirty linen, in which pleasant manner she successfully carried out her project.

Once free, the question which Mathilde naturally had to consider was, what should she do next? She had forgotten to settle this before leaving her late abode, and yet it was a question which must certainly be settled without delay. The poor washerwoman, who had incurred great peril by assisting the escape of an inmate of a religious house, dared not keep her a moment longer than she could avoid, and there was no one in the town to whom she could trust herself. Under these circumstances she thought that the best thing to be done was to wander forth into the country, and this she accordingly did, having made such alterations in her dress as appeared necessary to prevent her being recognised as something different from the peasant woman for whom she wished to pass. The police were not very efficient in those days, and there were no detectives to speak of, so that she was not likely to be discovered by such agency. Newspapers also had not yet begun, and the advertisement system was unknown; otherwise her escape might have been attended with greater difficulties than was actually the case. As it was, she walked away from Reading without anybody taking the slightest notice of her, and wandered for many miles perfectly unmolested.

At last, as luck would have it, she reached a large farmhouse, and as she had by this time become weary and hungry, she followed her natural instincts, knocked

at the door, and asked for victuals and leave to rest herself. It was an old woman who opened the door, whose husband was the occupier of the farm, and being kindly disposed people, they granted Mathilde's request, allowed her to sit down in the kitchen, and gave her a bowl of milk and a large piece of brown bread, which she gratefully devoured, and felt much the better for it. Then the old couple began to question her about her condition and ways of life, and when she had invented some tale about having seen better days, and being driven by misfortune to seek a living where she could get it, they expressed great pity, and professed themselves very willing to assist her in any manner within their power. True, they had not much to offer; but the boy who kept the pigs had lately gone off to the wars, and if pig-keeping was not beyond her, why, the place was very much at her service.

Now, if there was anything which Mathilde disliked, it was a pig. The greediness and dirtiness of the animal she deemed objectionable, and extended her dislike to it even when cooked and salted. She never touched roast pork, avoided it all the more when boiled, abhorred sausages, and looked the other way when anybody offered her bacon. But, having no very definite idea as to where she could go to if she left the farm, and thinking that, at all events, it might serve her as a temporary home until something better should turn up, she determined upon accepting the generous offer of the worthy couple, and expressed her gratitude in terms which increased the favourable opinion they had already formed of her manners and character.

That night she slept beneath their hospitable roof,

and next morning her duties were pointed out to her, and she wandered forth upon the side of the hill near the farm, in close attendance upon a herd of pigs, to watch whom would be her daily duty. Although Mathilde's objection to the creatures may have been foolish and unreasonable, it will probably be conceded that the pig is not an animal which the majority of mankind would choose as a special pet or favourite; and to a person nurtured in the luxurious habits of a baronial castle, and trained in the intellectual refinement of conventional life, the occupation of keeping pigs on the side of a hill could hardly ever be congenial. It is, therefore, not surprising that Mathilde found it first monotonous, secondly tiresome, thirdly exceedingly disagreeable. She would sit for hours together, grasping in both hands her pig-driving stick, and musing upon things far removed from considerations of pigs or pork.

At nights she would return to the farmhouse, heavy and dispirited, so that the old farmer and his wife would rally her on her dejected appearance, and declare to each other that she must either be in love, or have committed some offence over which she now brooded with remorse. Yet her youth appeared to contradict the probability of the latter supposition, and she looked them both so straight in the face when she spoke, that the old man remarked that no one who did *that* could be guilty of anything serious.

Meanwhile, it may be supposed that the Baron was not very well pleased when the news reached him that his daughter had disappeared. He hurried off at once to the convent, and refused for some time to believe that

it could really be the case. If he had lived a little later there would have been plenty of people to suggest to him that Mathilde's disappearance was only an invention of the Lady Superior's, and that the poor girl was certainly either bricked up alive, or immersed in some



She keeps the Pigs.

dungeon below the convent. As it was, however, that age being comparatively ignorant, the Baron was told the simple truth, and actually believed it. His daughter had disappeared, and no one was more distressed thereat than the Lady Superior herself. The discipline of her convent was so good, and the sisterhood were all so much attached to her, that it was with difficulty that she

could bring herself to believe that any of them had assisted the runaway to escape; and as to the washer-woman, no thought of her connivance ever entered the Lady Superior's head. Had it done so, indeed, she would never have believed that a daughter of the noble house of Guerre-à-mort would have so far demeaned herself as to hide in a box of dirty clothes, or wander forth, alone and unattended, into the country. The good Lady, never having admitted the god of love into her well-regulated breast, did not know his powers, which experience has proved to be such as are able to overcome all considerations of rank and dignity, and occasionally to make people do things even more strange and incongruous than hide in dirty-linen boxes or keep pigs on a hill-side.

The Baron was easily convinced that no blame was to be attributed to his saintly relative, but this by no means put an end to his trouble. His daughter had gone, and he had no clue whatever to her place of concealment. Under these circumstances, he determined that the best thing he could do was to consult the powers of magic, who in those days were the substitute for our present Rural Police, and occasionally discharged their functions in a manner equally satisfactory. Those were not days in which witches and warlocks were so common as in earlier ages; but, scattered about the country, there were a goodly number of the creatures; and the Baron had little difficulty in determining whom to consult.

The Witch of Salt Hill was a famous personage in those days. The vicinity of Eton and Slough was at that time a favourite resort of witches, who used to flit

about through Windsor Forest at nights, and, I suppose, preferred to have their day-residences not inconveniently remote therefrom. It is not improbable that they would have continued to frequent the neighbourhood down to the present day, but for the establishment of the sacred foundation of Eton College. There, as we know, the Provost and Fellows have, from the very earliest days of the college, been a body of men of singularly holy as well as learned reputation. Their blameless and saintly lives have driven evil far from the locality in which they dwell, and in the days of which I tell their power was already beginning to be felt. It gradually increased until, as I say, all witches and warlocks left the neighbourhood, although one of the last of them is said to have uttered a prophecy that the powers of evil should again return when Eton should be governed by others than her own children ; and if what I have lately heard be true—namely, that the ancient government by Provost and Fellows has been superseded, and a new authority instituted, of which a portion is non-Etonian—it may be that the days of withcraft will return, and the powers of darkness once more inhabit the neighbourhood. All this, however, has nothing to do with my present story.

No sooner had the Baron made up his mind that this was the best course to pursue than he rode off to Salt Hill to consult the celebrated witch whom I have mentioned. He found her with very little trouble, principally from knowing exactly where to look for her, which it is always well to ascertain, if you can, before you go in search of any one whom you wish to find. There was a very large thorn-tree, growing near a

spring at the side of a hill, close to which a species of rude cottage had been built into the hill, so that it had the appearance of being—and perhaps was—the way by which those who had the right, and the will to do so, could enter into the bowels of the earth. When the witch chose to come forth, she sat under the thorn-tree; at other times, those who sought her had to approach the door of the cottage, and strive to attract her attention in the best way they could.

When the Baron arrived near the place, with some dozen of retainers, he left his horse with the latter at a short distance from the spot, and walked up to the spring alone. The witch was not to be seen outside, so the anxious father strode up to the cottage, and would have knocked at the door, only there did not happen to be any. The place was built of huge stones, and the entrance was through a large hole, left open as if for a door, which had never been put up. It was as dark as pitch when you looked in, and the Baron, fearless as he was, felt a kind of unpleasant sensation stealing over him as he stood opposite the hole. However, he had come on business which could not be delayed; so, after a moment's hesitation, he shouted out at the top of his voice, “Halloo! is any one within?” and waited for a reply. As none came, the Baron presently tried again, saying, in an equally loud voice, “I am come to consult the wise woman of Salt Hill. Is it here she dwells?” Still no answer came from within, and the haughty Norman stamped impatiently on the ground, chafing at the delay which his imperious spirit could have ill brooked at any time, but which was more than ever galling at the present moment, when his anxiety about

his daughter had thrown him into a state of feverish irritation and excitement. He doubted as to the next step which he should take, and was just considering whether he had omitted any form which ought to have been observed in approaching such a person as a witch, when a voice suddenly spoke from within the cottage, saying, in a somewhat gruff voice—

“ Who comes to Salt Hill’s ancient dame ?
Tell both thine errand and thy name.”

Now the Baron was little accustomed to be addressed so unceremoniously, or to be asked his name in this manner, so his first impulse was to refuse to reply, or at least to rebuke the speaker for the incivility of the question. However, as he had come on important business, and was really desirous of obtaining information as to his beloved daughter, a moment’s reflection convinced him that it would be an act of folly on his part to fly into a passion about a trifle, or to stand upon ceremony with a power which might be able to assist him, and willing to do so or not according to his own behaviour. So he made up his mind to tell his name and errand at once, and was about to do so, when, even whilst he hesitated, the voice spoke again :—

“ Our Norman lords are men of war,
And love their foemen to defy ;
But, come he here from near or far,
Who with the Guerre-à-mort can vie ? ”

At this unexpected mention of his own name, the Baron started back, but immediately recovering himself, he spoke in as reverential a tone as he could manage to find for the occasion. “ Since thou knowest who I am,

good dame," said he, "mine errand is very likely also known to thee. I want my beloved daughter, who has disappeared from the convent at Reading, and can nowhere be found. If thou canst find her for me and restore her to mine arms, I will grudge thee no reward that my castle can give."

At these words a low sigh proceeded from the interior of the cottage, as if the offer of a bribe had given pain to its virtuous inmate, or the Baron's request had been of an unexpected and afflicting character. However, after a few moments' pause, the same voice again spoke:—

"Whilst on this earth we live and move,
Some sweetness in our lives is found ;
But what more sweet than children's love,
Our very heart-strings twined around ?
Yet to each parent comes an hour
(Though fain he would the same delay)
When other and resistless power
Will steal the youthful heart away.
And when a father here inquires
For daughter lost ; then, let him learn
That daughters, though they love their sires,
To other loves some day will turn ;
Nor convent rules nor home's own charms,
Will keep them from a lover's arms."

As the voice uttered these strange and not altogether consoling words, the Baron stroked his beard, pulled his moustache, and racked his brains in the vain endeavour to bring to mind any lover with whom it was at all likely that his daughter should have eloped. The idea of her eloping at all was unpleasant; but those were strange times, and he knew well enough that such things had happened before, and would not improbably

happen again. The puzzle to him was as to the happy individual upon whom Mathilde could possibly have placed her affections. He thought of all their acquaintances, turning over in his mind the circumstances under which his child had met them, and, one after the other, he rejected the possibility of any one of them being the favoured individual. There was Baron Eau-de-vie, who lived within calling distance, but his habits of intemperance put him at once out of the question ; then the lord of Burnham was a worthy man, but being past eighty, and totally blind, was scarcely likely to have become the object of a maiden's affection ; these and various others he thought over, and remained musing for a short time before he spoke again.

Then it came into his head that perhaps it was all false after all, and the witch was either chaffing him, or knew nothing about it at all, and was making a guess at a solution of his difficulty, which, however likely to be correct as regarded the generality of young ladies, was most improbable with respect to a damsel of high degree, so well and carefully brought up as he considered his child to have been. As this thought struck him, he spoke out aloud at once. "What meanest thou ?" he cried. "Men will woo, and girls will have lovers, as we all know full well ; but to suppose that the young Baroness of Guerre-à-mort would fly from her convent with any lover that ever was born is an error and an insult to boot. Trifle not with me, then, whoever thou art, but tell me truly, an thou knowest, what has really become of my daughter ?"

A low laugh issued from the cottage as the same voice replied to this appeal with the following words :—

“ Oh mighty are Barons in battle array,
Full swift are their steeds and full sharp are their swords ;
But the heart of a maiden must have its own way,
And Love is far stronger than Barons and Lords.
He climbs the high walls of the castle so strong,
In vain your defences your treasure to shield ;
To words which are whispered by lover’s true tongue,
The peeress and peasant will equally yield.”

This reply was by no means more satisfactory to the Baron than the first had been, and he saw that there was evidently but little information to be obtained from the Witch of Salt Hill. Turning away, therefore, with a moody air, he rejoined his servants, mounted his steed, and returned to his castle, very much disgusted with his want of success. Scarcely had he left the place before the head of an old woman peered forth from the entrance of the cottage, and presently the whole figure followed. It was that of an aged crone, clad in a long grey cloak, with a strange head-covering of handkerchiefs twined in the form of a turban, from which a few grey locks escaped and fluttered in the wind around the venerable head. She held in her hand a strong staff, upon which she leaned, whilst she carefully looked right and left to make sure that her visitors had all departed. As soon as she had convinced herself of this fact, she turned round again to the entrance of the cottage and called in a low voice—“ It is quite safe ; come forth, my lord, come forth !” Upon this there was a movement inside the place, and there presently stepped forth a young man, the pallor of whose handsome countenance betokened recent illness, and who supported himself upon a stout oaken staff. Had the Baron stood where he had been standing but a

few minutes before, he would scarcely have departed so easily, for in this individual he would have seen the hereditary enemy of his house standing close beside him.

In truth, Brother Rhine, the witch of Salt Hill had been, somehow or other, greatly indebted to the St. Aunay family; and after Count Horace had been wounded in his skirmish with the Baron, he had found a secure retreat in her abode at Salt Hill. There, carefully nursed, and perhaps doctored by some wondrous charms of which mortals who do not happen to be witches know nothing, the young nobleman had rapidly recovered from the effects of his wound. The country, however, was still so much under the control of the Lancastrian party, that Count Horace deemed it his wisest plan to remain for some time in concealment, especially since he found that the report of his death had evidently so far softened the Baron that he had not pursued his work of devastation as he probably would have done if he had believed that the head of the house of St. Aunay was still alive and likely to take the field against him upon a favourable opportunity. This, then, was the reason of the Count's being in the cottage of the witch upon the very day of the Baron's visit, and as soon as the latter had departed, the wise woman began to discuss the subject of his daughter and her supposed elopement. Whether or not her arts had enabled her to discover the direction of Mathilde's flight, and her present place of abode, is a question we need hardly pause to ask. It is very likely that her statement to the Baron had been little more than a shrewd guess that if a young lady fled secretly from a convent, there was in all

probability a gentleman in the case, in which surmise she was certainly not far wrong. But if she had known where Mathilde was she certainly would not have disclosed it to the anxious father whilst St. Aunay was close by, nor indeed under any circumstances without the consent of the latter. He had informed her fully of the true state of the case between the young Baroness and himself, and after the Baron had gone off, eagerly inquired of her as to where the fair lady was really to be found.

Now witches, although exceedingly wise, cannot tell more than they know, and are not obliged to tell all that they *do* know, except under extraordinary circumstances, therefore the witch of Salt Hill thought it best to assume a very grave and solemn air, and mysteriously assured her friend that all would be right, and that he would know everything that ought to be known as soon as the proper time for knowing it had arrived. This assurance was scarcely satisfactory to the young man, who pressed hard for an answer which should at least give him some indication of the course which he had better pursue in order to obtain tidings of the lost one. No such answer, however, could he obtain; and all that the old dame would tell him was to "keep his heart up," and to "have patience"—two pieces of advice which are excellent in themselves, but little calculated to allay the impatience of a young man who has lost his sweetheart and wants to find her as soon as possible. Patience the young Count found it impossible to have, and, finding himself very much better the next day, he determined to set out and see what he could accomplish by his own exertions.

It was a lovely morning, and as St. Aunay walked through the fields, he felt new life rising in his veins, and his whole being seemed reinvigorated by the bright sun and fresh air. He walked for miles without any very definite idea as to where he was going or what he should do, in which it will be observed he strongly resembled the condition of his beloved Mathilde. Still, disguised in the garb of a peasant, he wandered on, and towards evening reached no other place than the very farm at which the young Baroness was employed as a pig-keeper. Nor was this his only piece of good fortune, for, as luck would have it, he came upon the fair damsels herself, disconsolately sitting by the side of her pigs, and wishing herself anywhere else. This wish, as may easily be imagined, was immediately changed when she found that the strange peasant who approached was no other than her own Horace. She flew into his arms with the smallest possible delay, and he was forthwith able satisfactorily to explain to her that he was by no means dead, and almost entirely recovered from his wound.

The prospects of the two lovers did not, however, seem particularly bright even after they had thus met; and after a long discussion they could hardly make up their minds what would be the best course to pursue. Mathilde had the greatest objection to returning home, where she should hear nothing but abuse of her Horace and his family, not improbably coupled with reproaches directed against herself for having quitted the convent. To return to the latter was out of the question, and equally so to accompany the Count, who had no home to which he could take her. The only conclusion, therefore, at

which they found themselves able to arrive was that the lady had better continue her pig-keeping at least for a time, and that they should both wait patiently until better days. This arrangement, though not exactly pleasant to either of them, seemed most expedient upon the whole, and having finally come to the determination that such was the case, they took an affectionate leave of each other and again separated.

From that day Mathilde passed several months of weary suspense, being quite unable to content herself with the unusual pastime of looking after pigs, although she found some consolation in reading and writing—two accomplishments in which she had become tolerably perfect during her stay in the convent. Books, however, were not in those days what they now are, and those young ladies who depend for their literary amusement upon circulating libraries and sensation novels may thank the good fortune which decreed that they should come into the world some few centuries later than the days I speak of. Mathilde had one vast book of curious manuscript, which she had discovered in the farmhouse, and which was her constant companion. I am not sure as to the subjects of which it treated, but as it was probably of monkish compilation, it is most likely that it dealt either with the lives of saints or the theories of cookery, which were two subjects much in favour with the ecclesiastical fraternities of that day. Whatever it was, however, Mathilde made it the subject of her constant study, and varied her amusement by the use of the quill pens which she manufactured from the good farmer's geese. You must not ask me questions, Brother Rhine, as to the manner in which she obtained paper

and ink. None of these particulars have ever been handed down, and I have never cared to inquire. I can only say that in a certain noble family a huge scroll, covered with curious writing, has been long preserved, which tradition attributes to the ancestress who once kept pigs on that Berkshire hill-side ; and if the tradition is not strictly true, I would merely observe that it is just as probable as many another, upon the veracity of which the scoffer has never ventured to cast a doubt.

During this time the Baron de Guerre-à-mort was not sitting idly at home. He made every inquiry for his daughter, and was exceedingly vexed at his total want of success in discovering where she was. It is likely enough that he would have found her if she had been further off or more carefully concealed. But it may be observed as a rule which obtains pretty generally, that the things which are immediately under our noses escape our observation more than those which require a careful search. A hare sometimes squats securely in the middle of a ploughed field whilst the sportsman is seeking her in the thick wood ; the nest of the grey thrush, built in the bare cleft of a laurel-tree, often escapes the eye of the school-boy more easily than the nest more carefully hidden in the thick bushes ; or, to take another comparison, an elderly gentleman sometimes makes entirely ineffectual search for the spectacles which he has pushed up from his nose to his forehead, whereas, had they been hidden among papers, or left in some unusual place, he would quickly have discovered them. So it was, at any rate, that the Baron sought far and wide for his daughter without success, whilst she, poor girl, was keeping pigs on the hill-side all the time, a

very few miles distant from the castle of her respected parent.

The good man, however, found that before long he had other business to attend to than the agreeable occupation of daughter-hunting. The fortunes of the two great parties in the state underwent a considerable change. Instead of being any longer in the ascendant, the Lancastrians experienced heavy reverses, and those who had espoused the cause of the House of York gained ground continually on every side. In those times it was not so easy to change one's politics or one's party as has been the case in some later periods of the history of this country, especially if one had supported one's opinions by the carrying of fire and sword into the territory of one's opponents. Therefore the old Baron, who, as we have seen, had adopted this old-fashioned method of proceeding, would have found it somewhat difficult to change sides even if he had wished to do so. Nothing, however, could have been further from his intention. He believed the cause of the House of Lancaster to be just and right, and even if he had thought otherwise, I do not believe that he would ever have deserted a cause which he had once thoroughly espoused. So he remained loyal to the Lancastrian standard, and was as ready to fight for it in adversity as he had ever been when it seemed likely to triumph. The consequences, however, were not likely to be agreeable.

The Yorkists were daily gathering strength, and so devoted an adherent of the rival house could hardly escape their kind attention. Moreover, those who had seen their own homes despoiled by the Baron's invasion were not unmindful of their oppressor when the oppor-

tunity for revenge appeared to present itself. So it came about that the Baron's position was somewhat precarious. Some of his outlying farms were plundered; his retainers, when caught singly or in small numbers, were insulted and rudely treated, and threats of something worse likely to happen occasionally reached his ears. As yet, however, no armed body of Yorkists had appeared in the neighbourhood, and the strength of his castle, as well as the number and devotion of his followers, rendered the Baron de Guerre-à-mort tolerably secure against any attack save one from a powerful and well-organized force. Still he could see the storm lowering in the distance, and gathering in strength sufficient to give him cause for uneasiness. At last it seemed ready to burst. Small bands of Yorkists had been reported as hovering about various places in the vicinity of the castle, and rumour now had it that these bands were likely to be united at Reading under the command of some leader of note, who would forthwith proceed to march through Berkshire and Buckinghamshire, putting down all those who still dared to uphold the falling fortunes of the House of Lancaster.

Up to this time the Baron had remained within his castle walls, gloomily watching the signs of the times, and only taking precautions to preserve the efficiency of his troops by constant drill, and to protect his fortress and people against possible attack. But as soon as the above-mentioned rumours became well authenticated, he bethought himself that some more active steps should be taken. If the enemy should once concentrate his forces at Reading, he would probably carry all before him, and resistance would be doubly difficult, if not

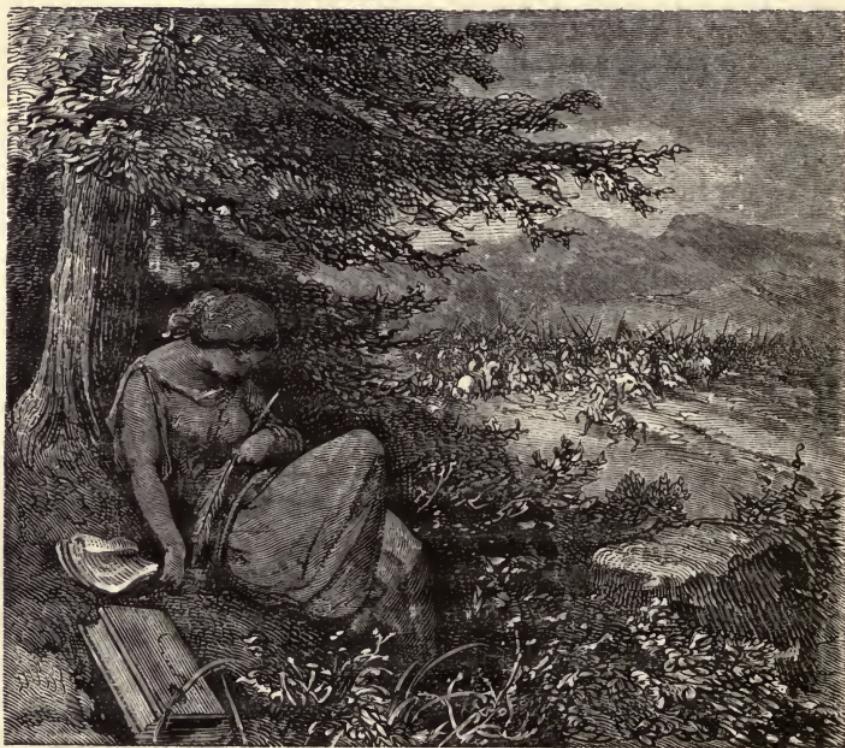
impossible. But if such concentration could be prevented, and the various bodies of Yorkists, who were said to be scattered over the face of the country, could be attacked and routed in detail, the tide might even yet be turned, and the drooping flag of Lancaster be once more raised as high as ever. Animated by such thoughts as these, and determined, if possible, to carry out the plan which appeared to him, and which probably was, the best under the circumstances, the Baron summoned his men, and leaving a small detachment to guard the castle, sallied forth with the intention of cutting off the advance of the Yorkists upon Reading.

It is difficult, however, for one body of men, unless greatly superior in numbers, position, and generalship, to act with success against four or five, and so it happened that before he had been many days in the field the Baron de Guerre-à-mort found that he had before him a task beyond his powers. A detachment of Yorkists was marching from Oxford, whilst at the same moment another party moved from Windsor; and from the direction of Basingstoke in one quarter, and Marlborough in another, a third and fourth body converged towards the same point. It will be easily understood that the Baron now ran no inconsiderable risk in his daring attempt. In the first place, he was by no means certain that his army was more numerous than any one of the Yorkist parties; and in the second, if he should engage and defeat one, he might have another on his flank before he was by any means ready to renew the combat. Prudence, therefore, would have seemed to dictate a retreat, unless indeed he could be sure of encountering his various enemies at the place and moment of his own choosing.

Such was the state of things on one lovely day in June, when Mathilde was engaged in her usual employment, which day by day grew more irksome to her as time wore on. She was seated under a tree, shading herself from the rays of the summer sun, her pen held listlessly in her hand, her scroll and book by her side, whilst she mused on the past, made plans for the future, and forgot the present, after the custom of persons when pretty comfortably seated and rather sleepily inclined. A distant noise aroused her from her reverie after a time, and as it drew nearer and nearer she knew but too well that she heard the shouts of men engaged in battle, and that one of those struggles was taking place which at that time, alas! were but too common in unhappy England.

From the tree under which she was seated she commanded an extensive view over the plain below, and ere long she was able to discern the contending forces as they issued from a pass between the hills, one party being apparently driven before the other. In the plain they rallied, and a desperate combat appeared to be going on; then, whilst the wave of men surged to and fro, horse and foot apparently mingled in an undistinguishable mass, a third body appeared upon the scene, marching round the base of one of the hills, and joining themselves to those who had first emerged from the pass. For a time all was confusion and clamour, and, amid the dust and din, Mathilde could make out nothing as to the exact character of the combatants. Presently, however, a light breeze lifted the dust, and she had a clearer view of the sight before her eyes. The reinforcements which had just arrived had at once altered

the fortunes of the battle, and the party which had at first driven its opponents victoriously before it was now evidently giving way. It needed no second glance to tell which was the winning side, for the banner of the



She watches the Battle.

white rose floated on high, and triumphant shouts of “A York! a York!” rent the air.

Baffled and beaten, the Lancastrians vainly endeavoured to hold together; slowly but surely they gave way before the pressure of superior numbers, and it was evident that the question was now only between an orderly retreat and an utter rout. Straining her eyes to

the utmost, Mathilde beheld at the head of the retreating party a tall and martial figure which she recognised but too clearly. Conspicuous among the throng by his height and noble bearing, and carrying him right gallantly even when matters were going so decidedly against him, the noble old Baron little knew whose eyes were fixed upon him with eager and agonized gaze.

At that moment I doubt whether Mathilde had a thought even for the lover for whose sake she had suffered so much; her father, the fond parent who had nurtured her from earliest infancy, upon whose knees she had sat and prattled, whose eyes had never lighted on her save with glances of tender love, whose conduct towards her had been one continued indulgence from the first hour of her recollection,—the father, moreover, whom she had selfishly left to live alone and bear his solitary lot in the world without his idolised child—that father was now in peril of his life, and probably about to perish before the very eyes of his ungrateful daughter. There she saw him, the brave old man, sitting upon his charger as if he were part of the animal, dealing blows right and left with the strength and vigour of a far younger man, parrying strokes aimed with right good will at his devoted head, and ever and anon shielding from attack some wounded follower, and covering the retreat of some retiring friends. And whilst the battle raged furiously around him, ever and anon the old man raised his war-cry aloud, “A Guerre-à-mort! a Guerre-à-mort!” and at each cry it seemed as if a new spirit animated his yielding troops, and with fresh energy they rallied and made head against the superior forces of their opponents. But the fight was too unequal to

last. That had happened which might have been anticipated. The Baron had attacked and partially routed a Yorkist band, when another party, directed by the shouts of battle, had hastened from their line of march and arrived in time to take part in the fray, and to throw a great preponderance of numbers on the side of the cause for which they fought.

The Baron strove in vain to perform an impossibility, and to convert defeat into victory. His men fell fast by his side, and he was soon left almost alone, surrounded by the triumphant enemy. Mathilde could bear the sight no longer, and, covering her face with her hands, burst into a flood of tears. But even thus the suspense was too terrible to bear. Presently, she lifted her eyes, and beheld the Lancastrians scattering in headlong flight, pursued by the triumphant partisans of the House of York. But where, oh! where was her father? She had not far to look. The old horse she knew so well lay dead upon the plain, but around him were clustered a group of men, evidently still engaged in some fierce conflict. In another moment they fell back, and she perceived a figure recumbent upon the ground, whilst a second figure stood over it, not to destroy, but to guard it from the blows of others. Could she—was it possible that she could—be mistaken? No: it was as she thought and hoped—her own Horace standing over the prostrate body of her father, was guarding his hereditary enemy from the destroying Yorkists.

Aye, so it was indeed, Brother Rhine, nor was this the first nor the last instance where love has proved stronger than hate in this curious world, and where chivalrous and valiant men have respected in others the

bravery which they so well knew how to practise themselves. St. Aunay was the commander of the Yorkist party who had turned the tide of that day's battle. Recognising his ancient foe, he would no doubt have sought him out with every intention of then and there taking his revenge for the past, had it not been for the special reasons which induced him to adopt a contrary course of proceeding. He watched, with an admiration which it was impossible to withhold, the gallant behaviour of the old nobleman when fighting against fearful odds. He refrained from interference whilst it could do no good; but when he saw the Baron's horse slain by the thrust of a pike, and its rider thrown upon the ground, he rushed forward to protect the fallen leader from those who would otherwise very speedily have disposed of him after a ruthless fashion. It was no easy or pleasant task; for the soldiery were excited by the stubborn resistance of the old Baron, and St. Aunay had to strike, strongly and fiercely, before he could rescue his foe from his own friends. He succeeded, however, and, in a few moments, the Baron, who had been partially stunned, as well by his fall, as by several blows by no means of a light character, which he had received in spite of St. Aunay's efforts for his preservation, rose from the ground without having sustained any such vital injury as had recently appeared to be almost inevitable. Bitter, however, were his feelings when he discovered to whom it was that he owed his life; for so deeply had the family feud become engraven upon his heart, that it is almost doubtful whether he would not have preferred death, to escape therefrom by means of the aid of a St. Aunay.

There was no time, however, for much to be said on either side. The Yorkists were pursuing their flying foes, and but few were left around the two noblemen, when from the hill-side, but a short distance off, they beheld a female figure hurrying towards them with eager gestures and evident excitement. Both recognised her at the same moment—both hastened to meet her—and in a brief space of time Mathilde was once more folded to her father's heart. Horace de St. Aunay could have wished that another breast had been the resting-place, but could hardly have expected it under the peculiar circumstances. He waited patiently, therefore (having no other reasonable alternative), until the father and daughter had indulged their natural affection for each other, and had entered upon certain mutual explanations, which appeared upon the whole to be satisfactory. Then the Baron turned to him, and for some time was unable to utter a word. The struggle was severe in his heart between his natural affection for his child and his cherished hatred for the foe of his house. But, luckily for all parties, the former prevailed.

The Baron was no fool, and probably felt that if Mathilde had run away once to look for her lover, it was exceedingly likely that she might do it again. Moreover, the Lancastrian cause was now in that condition that those who still upheld it would ere long have nothing else to uphold, and, whatever might become of himself, the old Baron had no desire to see his beloved daughter dispossessed of her patrimony, and possibly driven from house and home, or reduced to that employment as a necessity which she had recently adopted as a temporary—though most uncongenial—occupation.

So, like a sensible man, he allowed his reason and common sense to overcome his prejudice, and gave his consent to his daughter's marriage with the Count of St. Aunay. He could not have done a wiser thing. The Count's influence with the winning party in the state was naturally considerable, and was efficiently exercised in favour of his father-in-law, who was allowed to retain his castle and property, when others, less fortunate in their daughters' marriages, lost both on account of their political opinions.

Horace and Mathilde were speedily united, and, as old story-books usually say, "they lived very happily all the rest of their lives." It will also be doubtless satisfactory to you to know that none of the convent authorities ever discovered that the old washerwoman had had anything whatever to do with the disappearance of the young Baroness; that the farmer and his wife were liberally rewarded for their kindness to the latter; and that the followers and believers in the Witch of Salt Hill had a higher opinion than ever of her supernatural powers, since it had so plainly been proved that it was, as she had said, on account of a lover that the Baron's daughter had left the convent. And this is the way that there came a happy termination to "The Family Feud."

Father Thames here paused, and took a deep draught of ale; whilst he was engaged with which, his brother of the Rhine calmly and gravely put to him the singular question: "And what became of the pigs, Brother Thames?"

The potentate of our English river hastily put down

his glass, choked violently as he did so, and then answered with a laugh, "Confound your jokes, Brother Rhine, you made my liquor go the wrong way, which is a very unpleasant thing, let me tell you. But, after all, the rebuke was deserved, for my cross-questioning you so closely after your last legend. I own that legends are things which should be received with much faith and no questions, or the beauty of them is lost at once."

"I quite agree with you," responded he of the Rhine, "and it was with the object of bringing you to express your concurrence in this view that I asked the remarkably stupid question about the pigs. There are some people who always want to know a great deal more than is good for them, and who insist upon asking what became of each and every character of whom mention has been made in a legend. This is simply ridiculous, and very disagreeable to the teller of the story, who is obliged to introduce many minor characters into his tale, in order to fill up gaps, and illustrate the position of the principal personages, but who cannot be expected to know the final history and eventual fate of them all. Since, then, you agree with me, Brother Thames, I shall ask you to be good enough to listen to my next legend with a sincere determination to believe it if you can, and in any case to demand no explanation of circumstances which may seem strange, or with regard to persons who may appear to be unusual in name or character, or in both the two together."

"I promise to do as you wish," replied Father Thames to this request, upon which the other commenced at once as follows :—

The Giant Bramble-Buffer.

“There was once a Daddyroarer——”

“What the deuce is a Daddyroarer?” hastily interposed Father Thames.

The monarch of the Rhine gave him an indignant glance. “Is this the way you keep your promise?” he inquired, in a tone of some severity. “Another such interruption and I shall decline to continue the amusement of legend-telling. I have no objection, however, to inform you that the word Daddyroarer signifies a giant, though whence its derivation I am unable to tell you with any degree of certainty. It probably comes from two Teutonic words, but I should be sorry to attempt to give them in the original. There is something about the name, however, which conveys the idea of a giant. ‘Daddy,’ indeed, being the familiar appellation by which children occasionally designate their male parent, points, not so much to the paternal relationship of a giant with mankind, as to his size and proportions, which are as much larger than those of man as are the proportions and size of a father to those of his young children. I presume that the term ‘roarer’ is not intended to convey, as in the case of a horse, the notion of broken wind, but has rather reference to the gruff and deep-toned voice which usually characterizes the giant.

“But, be this as it may, I repeat the fact that there was once a certain Daddyroarer, or giant, who lived among the mountains near a certain part of my beautiful river. For many years, indeed, in the old, old times, the men of Rhineland were grievously troubled with

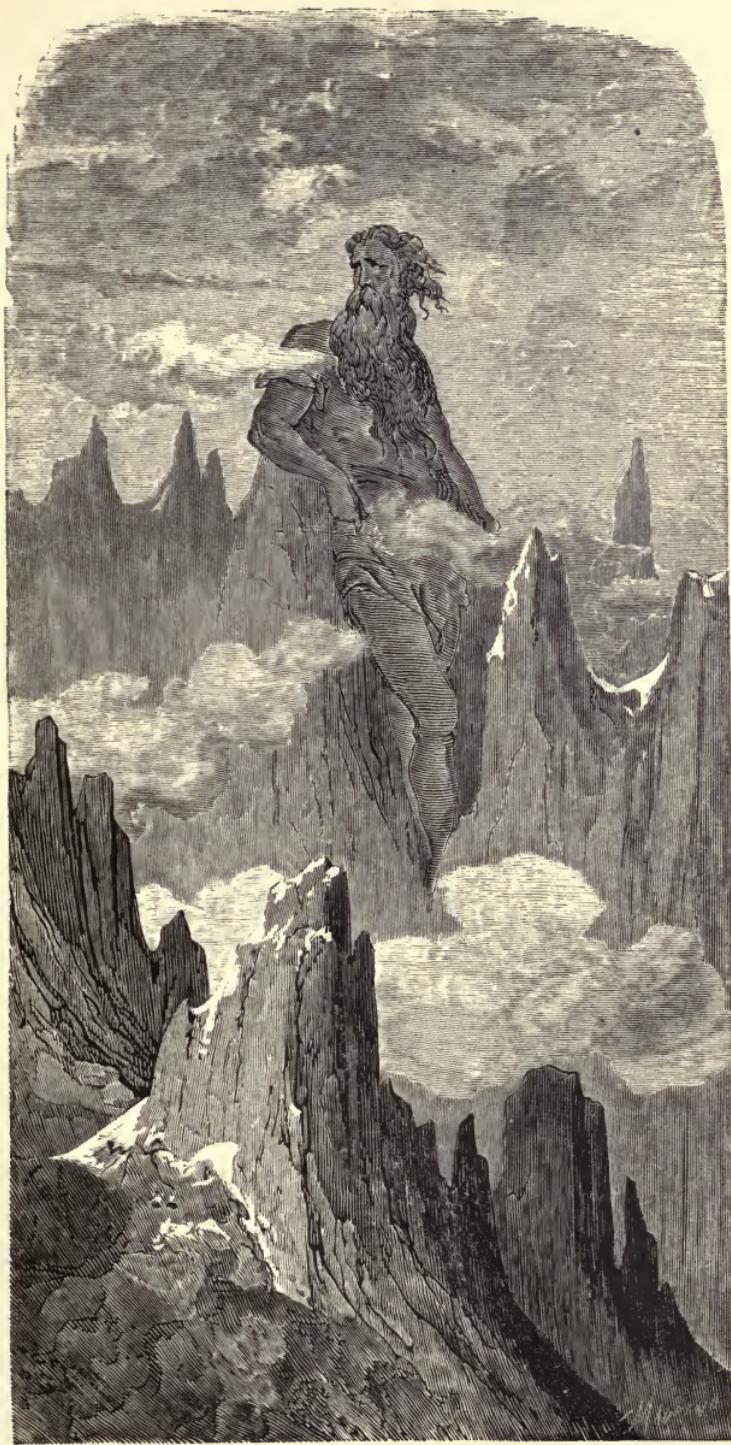
giants of different sorts and sizes. Tradition tells us that they all sprang from the mighty giant Senoj, who, as is well known, was born, nobody knows how or where, among the loftiest peaks of the Alps, and is down to this day popularly known in Rhineland as the father of all giants.

“Certain it is that his descendants, if such they were, proved exceedingly troublesome to mankind in general, and Rhenish mankind in particular. These creatures were, indeed, a plague and a pest to the country. They ate voraciously, and were not particular as to the food with which they satisfied their appetites. I am not prepared to say whether or no they were actually cannibals, and will therefore give them the benefit of the doubt; nevertheless, they were exceedingly unpleasant neighbours. The quantity of food which they required was alone sufficient to have placed this fact beyond question, for if you recollect the feats performed in the way of swallowing by your own old giant—

‘Robin-a-bobbin-a-Bilberry Ben,
Who ate more victuals than three-score men,’

and consider what would have been the effect upon your country of half-a-dozen Robins, you will have no trouble in understanding the difficulty which Rhineland experienced in supporting these worthies.

“What made it much worse, too, was the exceedingly loose notions which these beings entertained upon the subject of the rights of property. They apparently laboured under the delusion that the world was made for giants, and for giants alone—a theory exceedingly convenient for those who happened to be giants, but the



reverse of agreeable to those who did not come within that somewhat limited category. These excellent individuals took exactly what they pleased from its owner, without so much as 'by your leave' or 'with your leave,' and never for a moment dreamed of paying the value of the article in question. This was not a comfortable state of things for the people of the land, who saw their sheep and oxen, pigs and poultry, and other possessions which they prized, taken away by the great bullies against whom they dared not lift a voice nor wag a finger.

"But this was not all. It is bad enough to be robbed by another person, and not pleasant to be assaulted, but I am not sure whether to be utterly ignored and despised is not worse than either, especially when accompanied by such aggravating circumstances as those to which I am now going to allude. These huge creatures used to go walking about just as if there were no such things as men and women in the world. They would kick over a cottage for fun, sit down upon a barn or outhouse and crush its roof with their weight, out of mere ignorance or wanton folly; and even now and then set their foot on a human being and crush him into the earth, as if he were a snake, taking no account whatever of his prayers and struggles. In fact, they got into the habit of treating people as if they were merely an inferior part of creation placed upon the earth to cultivate and make it more useful for giants, and intended to be robbed, maltreated, trodden under foot, and put out of the way, just when and how it suited their imperious masters, for whom, and for whose sake alone, the universe had been created.

“ You may well imagine, Brother Thames, that this state of affairs was pre-eminently unsatisfactory to my poor people. No man’s life or property was secure, and all improvement was entirely prevented. Indeed, what was the use of building a house which was liable to be knocked down or kicked over by a giant at any moment? Of what avail would it have been to plant a field with wheat, oats, or barley, when at any and every period of the year all might be trodden down by the ruthless foot of the same monster, and the reapers possibly be stamped into the ground, together with the crops which they were gathering? Who would rear sheep and oxen of which he was sure to be robbed? and who would spend time, labour, and money upon anything when all was so insecure and uncertain? So it came about that the population diminished, no houses were built, few fields were sown, lands went out of cultivation, and it seemed as if, in a little time longer, the country would be neither more nor less than a dreary wilderness. Indeed, the whole face of the country was changed by the strange freaks of the Daddyroarers.

“ Sometimes they would amuse themselves by lifting huge masses of rock, and therewith building a mountain; at another time they would fling enormous stones at each other in sport, which was pastime anything but delightful to their neighbours, whose lives and property were thereby grievously imperilled. And not the least part of the mischief they did was when they took a fancy to snowball each other, which the survivors of them still practise, especially in some parts of Switzerland, where the avalanche, which occasionally overwhelms the unhappy traveller, although mistakenly attributed to

natural causes, is in reality nothing more than the fall of a larger snowball than usual, hurled by the mighty arm of one of those mountain giants.

“At the time I speak of there was one particular giant who had for a long while been remarkably troublesome. Not only was his appetite more insatiable than that of his brethren, but he was endowed with a spirit of mischief, which rendered him an especially disagree-



Giants Mountain-building.

able neighbour. If he met a man he generally gave him a kick, which sent him off fifty yards up in the air, and in most instances proved fatal. He never passed a cottage without sitting down on the roof, or kicking the wall down, and would walk away from a farm with a couple of haystacks, one under each arm, simply for the love of plunder, and when he really did not require the hay for his own purposes.

“ You will hardly require much argument in order to convince you that this giant was a most obnoxious person, and was consequently held in great detestation by all the poor creatures who had the misfortune to dwell near him. By these he was generally called by the euphonious name of ‘Old Bramble-Buffer,’ although the title by which he was known among his own kith and kin was probably quite different, and has not been handed down to posterity. For many years he tyrannized over the country round, and the story which I am about to tell you will show how great his fame and physical strength must have been, and thus remove any surprise which you might otherwise possibly have felt at the power of one monster to keep a whole neighbourhood in subjection.

“ When their houses had been again and again destroyed, the wretched inhabitants began to seek shelter in holes in the caves and rocks, in which they hid themselves, their wives, families, and effects, and only issued forth by stealth at night, or when they had reason to believe that their terrible oppressor was away from home. In consequence of this state of things, our friend the Daddyroarer found his fun somewhat diminished. He seldom encountered a man now, the opportunities afforded him for kicking down houses were comparatively rare, and he began to think life in the country, under such circumstances, rather tedious. It was in vain that he occupied himself in mountain-building with some of his fellow-giants, snowballing was cold work, and became tiresome after a time; and when he once tried to amuse himself by baling out my river, he found the task too great for even one of his gigantic

strength. He kept on at it for some time, being too stupid to understand that my river, being well supplied at its sources, and aided by many a tributary stream and mountain torrent, was in no sort of way affected by the abstraction of the few millions of gallons of which his puny efforts robbed it, and his exertions only caused intense mirth to my elves and demons, without for a moment lessening the volume of water in the river, or in any way diminishing the strength and rapidity of the current.

“ So when Master Bramble-buffer became tired of all these occupations and amusements he had few resources left. Persons of his description are not given to literary or intellectual pursuits, and in all probability both reading and writing were accomplishments entirely unknown to the ordinary class of giants. Eating, drinking, and sleeping appeared to be the chief objects for which these creatures existed, except to make themselves generally disagreeable to their neighbours, which was an object in which it is quite true that they rarely failed to achieve complete success. So when the excellent Bramble-buffer had found out that the task of emptying the Rhine was beyond his powers, and cared not to fall back upon the old pastimes, of which he had had his fill, he took to the practice of taking long walks, and journeying into other countries wherein he might find fresh people to terrify, new fields to destroy, and a wider scope for the exercise of his vast strength and malevolent disposition.

“ He marched over a great extent of ground, and did a vast deal of mischief during these excursions. Such was his size and weight, that the commonest action on his

part was sometimes fraught with the most unexpected results and the direst consequences to mankind. For instance, if he carelessly slung his walking-stick as he moved along the road, the implement, being of the size and thickness of a well-grown fir-tree, brushed off the heads of trees—and of people too, for that matter, if it came in contact with them,—just as a stick in the hand of an ordinary mortal knocks over poppies and thistles if employed for that purpose. Then if he sat down on a small hill to rest, it was as if a man had jumped with his full weight on a mole-hill of which the earth was newly thrown up and consequently soft. The ground trembled beneath his weight as if with the shock of a sudden earthquake; and very often squashed under him so as to jut out on either side, and cause sudden and most inconvenient alterations in the fields and woods on each side of the hill, more especially so in those cases in which dwellings happened to have been erected thereupon. And woe betide the owner of ponds or wells when the Daddyroarer happened to be thirsty as he passed by them. It was no unusual thing for him to empty a pond at a draught, and I have known a whole village affected with drought for weeks together because old Bramble-buffer had taken a fancy to drink of the wells by which it was supplied with water.

“In his journey at last the old fellow came to the sea-shore, and having never before visited the blue ocean, he was abundantly delighted at all he saw. Even the coarse and blunted nature of a giant cannot fail to be struck with admiration at the first sight of the glorious sea. The waves breaking with regular and solemn force upon the shore, as if protesting ever against their

enforced restraint within prescribed limits : the foam dancing lightly upon the water far away out at sea ; the bright rays of the sun reflected in varying lights upon the shifting waters ; the ships riding at anchor, or merrily cleaving the waves asunder in their onward course ; the sea-birds skimming along the bosom of the sea, ever and anon with shrill scream dipping their long wings in the spray of the wave, and mounting again in high air with joyous flight ; the huge fish showing his scaled form for an instant in the light of day, and the next moment burying himself fathoms deep in the world of waters below ; all these things, passing before the eye at the same moment with the rapidity of thought, strike the beholder, be he giant or man, with mingled awe and wonder.

“ In the case of old Bramble-buffer, however, neither feeling lasted long, and after a very short space of time the spirit of mischief arose within his breast, and tempted him to try his powers of doing evil under the new circumstances before him. Placing himself in a recumbent posture, and supporting his huge frame upon his two stalwart arms, he began to blow violently down upon the sea below, with all the force of his mighty lungs. The effect was instantaneous. The bosom of the deep was troubled as with a terrible hurricane. The waves reared up their heads, the foam danced higher than ever, the sea-birds shrieked more loudly, and the fishes were astonished at the wondrous commotion which had arisen upon the surface of their watery home. The poor mariners, who were taken totally unawares by the extraordinary suddenness of the storm, were, as may well be supposed, in considerable trouble. Their ships

were driven from their moorings, masts were snapt asunder, sails and rigging rent and injured irreparably, and several men and boys blown overboard by the violence of the terrible blast. Indeed, more than one vessel was lost, and an immense amount of property



Bramble-buffer Storm-making.

utterly destroyed; and all because of this mad freak of the mischievous old giant.

“But the best of the joke in this case was that the poor mortals had no idea whatever of the cause of the disaster which had so unexpectedly befallen them, and a lengthy correspondence was carried on in the news-

papers of a certain country whose inhabitants think themselves wiser than anybody else, as to the cause of storms, the efficacy of storm signals, and the possibility of foretelling when the weather is going to be calm or rough. Some people wrote letters which appeared to the world exceedingly wise, whilst others published ideas which every one agreed to be remarkably foolish, but none of them ever hit upon the right cause of this catastrophe, and possibly many others of a like character, nor did any person ever dream for a moment that the whole of the affair was owing to the whim of old Bramble-buffer and his desire to try his strength upon the waves of the ocean. When he had accomplished his purpose, put everybody and everything into the greatest confusion, and done all the mischief he could in the shortest possible time, the fellow sat up, folded his arms, and indulged in a series of hearty laughs and strange roars of pleasure which the innocent people of the neighbourhood took for claps of thunder, and said it was a good thing ; that the thunder-storm would clear the air, and the wind would soon be lulled.

“ Giants, however, like men, find pleasures greater in anticipation than in realisation, and our old friend thought it too much trouble to repeat the experiment of raising the wind, which is one never to be performed without a certain amount of difficulty. Accordingly, he resolved to seek for some other amusement, and turning away from the sea-shore, again penetrated into the interior of the country. It would be endless to tell you all the strange pranks he played, and how gradually his name became known and detested throughout the whole country through which the river which bears my name

holds its course. If he desired notoriety, he certainly had it to his heart's content, and never was there a being more feared and hated since the beginning of the world.

“At last, having travelled far enough, he returned by easy stages to the country from whence he had set out, and there recommenced his old evil practices with the smallest possible delay. He had always a spite against my beautiful river, I suppose because he had failed in emptying it; but, whatever the reason may have been, he liked it not, and used to vary his occupations sometimes by pitching pieces of mountain into it, and close by its side, so as to make its shores if possible unapproachable by mortal foot, in doing which he added greatly to the wild beauty of the scenery, without in reality doing the smallest harm either to the river or to mankind.

“After a while, old Bramble-buffer began to find that the effects of his bad and cruel conduct towards mankind had so diminished the number of those who used to dwell in houses, that he had some difficulty in obtaining supplies from farms and homesteads as before. He therefore, much against his will, was obliged to take to hunting and trapping wild animals, in which he was not very skilful, but for this he was in some measure compensated by the advantages of size and strength, which enabled him to catch creatures which his skill alone would never have brought within reach of his devouring jaws.

“In his search after game he was in the habit of roaming far and wide over the mountains and through the forests of Rhine-land, and his loud cries and roars were often heard for miles, sending the frightened people into their holes and caves, where with trembling hearts they

sought a refuge from the mighty Daddyroarer. At last, one day, the old fellow had been more than commonly successful in his hunting. Chance had thrown in his way several roe-buck and sundry hares, of which he had made a very hearty meal, and naturally felt rather sleepy afterwards. He therefore wandered slowly through the forest, looking for some convenient and comfortable spot upon which he might deposit his huge carcase, and indulge in that after-dinner nap which is ordinarily so agreeable to persons of a certain age. In a giant's case, such naps are almost always unnaturally long and deep, and in fact these vast beings have been known not unfrequently to sleep round from one dinner-time to another, when their repast has happened to be somewhat larger and more satisfactory to themselves than common.

“Old Bramble-buffer looked about, and not seeing any eligible resting-place at hand, determined to make one for himself by pulling up a tree or two, and so finding a pillow in their roots and the earth which would be upturned therewith. So taking hold of a large tree near him, he gave it a twist and a turn, such as a gardener might do in pulling up a radish, or a labourer in performing the same office upon a turnip, and produced precisely the same effect. The tree was uprooted, and remained in the hands of its destroyer. But it so happened that this was not an ordinary tree, or rather that there were some extraordinary circumstances connected with it. It was of very great size, and growing on the side of a hill; in which a large cave had been excavated beneath and among the roots of the trees, which served as props and supports for the sides and roof of the same.

“This cave was inhabited by a number of unhappy mortals, who had been driven hither by the careless cruelty of the great giant, and who little thought that the tyranny of their oppressor would follow them even into this dark and hidden retreat. They, of course, were thrown into the most terrible consternation by his present feat. The uprooting of the tree was to them the destruction of their home once more, the ruin of all they loved, the literal annihilation of their property, and the loss of all that could still make life dear to them. Fancy the miserable, the extraordinary results which would happen if one’s house were suddenly lifted up, and the walls, ceilings, beams, and rafters fell in around us on every side. Well, this was precisely what happened to these unfortunate creatures. Nor had they the smallest time for preparation. It all came upon them in a moment.

“As we have seen, it was only the desire of the giant to provide himself with a pillow which caused him to pull up the tree, and although he would probably have done so just the same, or perhaps all the more, if he had known what the result would be, there is no reason to suppose that of such result he had the least idea, or indeed that he ever troubled his head about the possible or probable result of his action to anybody but himself. As soon, however, as he had pulled up the tree, and perceived the effects which he had thus produced, the old rascal burst into a roar of laughter. Indeed the sight was probably as amusing to him as it must have been horrible to one of the sufferers. The poor little mortals were running to and fro, each with the most woebegone expression of countenance, unable to make

out what had happened to them. Some, indeed, were entangled in the roots of the tree, and whirled up aloft with it in the giant's hands, some were half smothered by the fallen earth, and the rest were endeavouring to make their escape in the best manner that they could. The surprise had been so great, and the result of his tree-plucking so unexpected and extraordinary, that it was quite a novel sensation which old Bramble-buffer experienced, and he continued to roar with laughter until his sides ached again.

“When he had, after some moments, partially regained his composure, the old spirit of mischief burned too strongly within him to admit of his either attempting to repair the injury he had done, or leaving the poor creatures whom he had so cruelly disturbed to repair it for themselves if they could. On the contrary, he made matters worse, and just for the fun of the thing, stamped several of the mortals into the earth as they were wildly flying from the ruins of their home, and thus put



He uproots the Tree.

an end to their lives and troubles together. Probably, out of mere mischief, he would have destroyed more of them, if he had happened to have fallen in with the pastime before dinner. Having dined, however, he was much less inclined to any active exertion, and therefore contented himself with putting his foot upon those who were more immediately within his reach, and then, feeling somewhat fatigued, sat down on that very spot and prepared for his usual nap. First, however, he indulged in another laugh at the curious incident which had just occurred ; then he peered down into the cave below, and wondered how any living creatures could exist in such a dark, dismal place, and what the nature and habits of such creatures could be. This being a subject too vast and deep for the intellect of a giant, he could not entertain it without giving a tremendous yawn, which still more inclined him to sleep. So, arranging his position as comfortably as he could upon his back, which is a giant's natural posture when about to turn in for the night, he composed himself to slumber, without a thought of remorse for the unhappy beings whom he had just treated in so ruthless a manner, and in a very short time was buried in the land of dreams.

"Now, amongst those who had been driven from the shelter of the cave, and rendered houseless and homeless in a moment by the act of the giant, was a worthy person of the name of Hans. His other name is unknown to me, or at least I have forgotten it at the present moment, which comes to much the same thing. Hans had followed the honourable profession of a tailor in happier days, before the tyranny of the giant had destroyed trade, crippled commerce, and made men care-

less as to whether they wore coats or trousers at all when their whole lives were so full of misery and uncertainty. When tailoring, like other handicrafts, thus fell into disuse, and men who were homeless and houseless frequently became clothes-less also, Hans faced the matter boldly, and lived by his wits like the others, making himself exceedingly useful in the cave-life which he and his companions found themselves obliged to adopt. No one knew better how to arrange the interior of the caves after the best and most convenient fashion; no one was more urbane to the men, or more courteous and obliging to the women; no one, in short, had proved himself a more useful and agreeable companion in that banished community.

“Having been engaged in some domestic occupation within the cave at the time of the misfortune which befell its inmates, Hans bore his full share in the general calamity, and indeed only owed his escape with life to his activity and presence of mind. Whirled upwards with the tree, he clung tightly to the nearest root, and had the wisdom to drop himself just at the right moment upon the ground, and run lightly away into the brushwood. As soon, however, as the assault was over, and the destroyer of his brethren had lain down to sleep, the bold Hans again came forth.

“Many men would have fled as far as possible from that scene of sorrow and destruction, and thought only of the preservation of their own lives from the fate which had befallen so many of their kind. But Hans had too much public spirit to take any such selfish course. He descended without delay into the cave, and ascertained as well as he could the full extent of the damage which

had been sustained. Then he ran to and fro among his fellows, exhorting them to bear with courage this terrible reverse, and begging them to meet at once in a cave hard by, and consult as to the best measures which could be taken under the circumstances in which they found themselves.

“ In a very short time, owing to his exertions, more than a hundred of the unhappy mortals assembled together and began to take counsel for the future. As is usual in all such cases, there was a great variety of opinion. One man advised that they should all forthwith hang themselves, as life had become so insecure as to be almost worthless. It was urged, however, that this would afford no remedy for the existing state of things, and would be like throwing away your gold because you had been robbed of your silver. Besides, it would be an undignified thing to come to a general termination of so inglorious a character, and the proposal was speedily scouted as one totally unworthy of consideration.

“ Then it was suggested by another person that a subscription should immediately be raised for the sufferers, and advertisements to that effect be inserted in all the daily papers. As the speaker was the proprietor and editor of one of these, it is possible that he had an eye to business in making the suggestion, which, however, fell flat upon the ears of the audience. No one there had any money to spare, and everybody was more or less a sufferer from a calamity which had fallen so generally upon the race of man. Some advised that they should all emigrate, but then they didn’t know where to go to, and, in short, it seemed as if they were

likely to come to no agreement; everybody objected to everything that anybody else said, no one seemed to have any weight or authority in the assembly, and it really appeared a hopeless case altogether.

“At last Hans, who had kept a respectful silence for some time, as became one in his position, whilst others talked nonsense (which is occasionally done at public meetings, as well as elsewhere, down to the present day), came forward, and asked leave to offer his advice. ‘Gentlemen,’ he said, ‘I hope you will agree with me that it is necessary to do something in this case. To sit still with our hands folded, and do nothing, would be certainly the very worst course we could possibly pursue. The horrible cruelty of the vile Daddyroarer has first driven us from our former happy homes, destroyed our hopes of prosperity, and condemned us to an almost savage life; then, not content with the amount of misery which he had already inflicted on us, the tyrant has followed us even into the forest, uprooted and ruined the new home which we had formed for ourselves, and once more turned adrift upon the wide world those of us who have been lucky enough to escape with life. How long then are we to endure such a state of things as this? While this huge monster walks the earth unchecked and unrestrained, no man’s life will be safe; and even if we run away and find for ourselves fresh hiding-places, what security have we that at any moment he may not appear amongst us and again inflict upon us ruin and destruction? Depend upon it, gentlemen, this question must be looked in the face. It cannot be evaded any longer. Running away is useless. The enemy must be no longer avoided. At this moment he sleeps in security over

our ruined homes. He must be attacked! Never was there a more auspicious moment! Let us take courage, and assail the giant where he lies!'

"As Hans spoke a thrill of horror ran through the meeting, who could by no means bring themselves to realise the idea of attacking a monster so many sizes larger than themselves, and gifted with strength so infinitely greater than the united efforts of many of them put together. So a murmur of voices, all in the negative, greeted the little tailor when he resumed his seat; and presently one of those present, who, being the oldest, was reputed the wisest (which, however, is by no means a safe rule to go by), stood up and spoke in his turn. He said that it was folly to talk after the fashion of the speech to which they had just listened; and, as this remark was somewhat personal, it was at once much applauded, which encouraged the orator to proceed. He remarked that since the first man came into the world down to that day no man had ever dreamed of attacking a giant, and, therefore, that it could not now be done. This sentiment also commended itself to many of his hearers, who cherished the belief that no new scheme ought ever to be entertained, as the world had gone on so far very well without it, and that what had never been done before had better not be attempted. Finding his audience possessed with such a good conservative spirit, the old man said further, that as giants had from time immemorial tyrannized over man, it was doubtless intended that they should do so, and it might savour of impiety to endeavour to alter a state of things which had lasted so long. Moreover, the power and authority of giants over men was so well

established that it would be almost impossible to reverse the order of things. Comparing such an attempt with efforts made in other countries, it seemed to him to be almost as absurd as an attempt to reform a House of Lords, or reverse the decision of a Governing Body. Then, hazarding a joke (which was very well received), he said, that if his friend the little tailor wanted 'his goose cooked,' no doubt he could get that operation performed by attacking authority, and if he chose to run his head against a wall, no one could prevent him. But he (the speaker) would appeal to those before him, as sensible and practical men, and ask them to reject as idle and absurd the wild theories placed before them by little Hans. Giants would be giants, and men would be men to the end of the world, and they must put up with the misfortune which had befallen them as well as they could, and not make it worse by entering upon such a hopeless enterprise as that which had been proposed.

"This speech met with so much approval from the mortals there assembled, who were thoroughly cowed and subdued in spirit by the long course of suffering which they had undergone, that Hans at first felt his heart sink within him. He knew well enough that he could do nothing alone, and it seemed as if all were against him. But, remembering the old adage, that 'Fortune favours the brave,' and being a man of undaunted pluck and resolution, he determined not to be put down either by taunts or claptrap. He therefore rose again, and ignoring, like a wise man, the foolish and vulgar joke directed against his own most respectable trade, proceeded to state his views to the best of his ability. He acknowledged that reverence ought to be

paid to age, and that the last speaker was consequently entitled to every attention. At the same time he could not but observe, that if his doctrine were to hold good, that things should be left to go on as they are merely *because* they are, and that nothing new ought ever to be attempted for fear of failure, the world would be in a very lamentable condition, and no improvement would ever take place in anything. He modestly remarked that, according to tradition, mankind at one period of their history wore only the skins of animals, and at a previous time no clothes at all, and that, if the old gentleman's views were correct, they never ought to have quitted the latter condition. 'Moreover,' said he, to cut a long story short, 'it has been suggested to me that *I* may attack the giant alone if I please, and no one will interfere. Be it so: I only ask for six others—half-a-dozen volunteers—and sooner than submit any longer to the present misery and degradation in which I and my fellow-men are placed, I will make the attempt; I can but perish, and, in such a cause, death will be glorious.'

"At these words of the valiant tailor a low murmur of applause ran through the audience, who now began to perceive that he was really in earnest, and had not spoken at first out of mere bravado. For the honour of that oppressed race, I am glad to be able to add, that before any long time had elapsed, the six volunteers whom Hans had demanded were forthcoming in the persons of that number of sturdy young men, who felt that the hour had come when one great effort must be made to set their race free from slavery, and were prepared to follow their brave leader in his perilous

enterprise. Indeed, a number of others offered themselves as soon as the thing was fairly started, for man is an imitative animal, and like a flock of sheep, if the leader once makes a dash down a lane or up a bank, there are always plenty to follow. Hans, however, carefully selected six of his own acquaintance, whom he knew to be skilled in certain trades, of which a knowledge would be requisite in order to carry out his plans, and upon whom he knew he could thoroughly rely. He now looked proudly round upon the other mortals, and calling his six friends to follow him, left the place of meeting, attended by the good wishes of those whose deliverance he was about to attempt,—not, however, altogether unmixed with sundry depreciatory sneers on the part of the old gentleman and his immediate followers.

“Without any delay, Hans journeyed back to the spot upon which the mighty Bramble-buffer lay fast asleep, his gigantic carcase resting at full length upon the ground. Hard by, the little tailor stopped his troop, and unfolded to them the plan which his fertile brain had conceived, and for the execution of which he depended upon their assistance. This was none other than to capture the monster, and either put him to death or render him the dependant and slave of those over whom he had so long tyrannized. It would of course be no easy task, but, on the contrary, one which would require much courage and determination, not to say self-sacrifice, as a possibility by no means remote. For, should the giant awake during the operations which were contemplated, he would probably make short work of Hans and his six followers; and thus, in

attempting to achieve the freedom of their people, they would emphatically have walked out of the frying-pan into the fire.

“Nothing daunted, however, Hans, speaking in a low tone of voice, informed his friends of all that he had planned in his head, and, knowing how valuable is example upon all such occasions, he told them that he would himself approach the enemy in the first instance, so that if he should suddenly awake, none other save the leader of the attack need of necessity be lost. The gallant six all expressed their readiness to go too, but Hans told them that they must in every respect obey his orders if he was to continue their leader, and upon this they yielded the point, and graciously consented to remain in comparative safety, whilst the valiant tailor advanced upon the foe. This he did very cautiously, and walked twice all round the sleeping giant in order to be quite sure that he was really fast asleep. This was indeed the case, as he speedily assured himself: there was no pretence about the matter; the deep, regular breathing of the sleeper, his closed eyes, and the air of repose visible in every feature, told their own tale, and Hans felt that no moment could be more propitious for his design. Accordingly, he climbed up into the branches of a neighbouring tree, and choosing one of them, which appeared from its position and size to be suitable to his purpose, swung himself lightly down, and alighted upon the giant’s chin, close to his mouth, to reconnoitre which was his first object and intention.

“He had a stick in his hand, and in entering the mouth, which was to him like some enormous cave, unfortunately touched with it some tender place in the

skin, which caused the monster to be seized with a violent desire to sneeze, which he accordingly did with an effect hardly anticipated by the luckless Hans, who, stick and all (the latter being broken in several pieces), was sent up many feet in the air, and fell, more nearly frightened than he had ever been before in his life, upon



Hans sent Aloft.

the enormous breast of the creature who had thus treated him. Most fortunately for the little fellow, giants sleep longer and more soundly than any other created beings, and it was not one sneeze that could cause old Bramble-buffer to awake from an after-dinner nap. The fall of Hans upon his breast was to him no more than would have been the dropping of a nut from an overhanging

tree, and with a kind of half-grunt, half-snore, he almost immediately became again completely unconscious, and, with his mouth wide open, returned to the land of dreams and snored audibly.

“ This, then, was the opportunity for which Hans had earnestly hoped, and he beckoned forward his followers, who approached at once, in order to perform their part of the tremendous task before them. They were divided into two parties, whose occupation was essentially different. Three of them employed themselves upon the beard and hair of the sleeping monster. They carefully, and with the lightest possible touch, separated hair from hair, and then fastening to each single hair a strong rope, as far as their ropes would go, bound it down to the ground with pegs or nails, or fastened it securely to the branch of some tree near at hand. They took every precaution not to wake the creature upon whom they were at work, and they performed their business with a skill and quickness which showed that Hans had made a good selection in the volunteers whom he had accepted. The monster was ere long bound by innumerable ties to the earth, and the number and strength of these was momentarily increased. Nor, indeed, were the operations of the three men confined to the hairs of the head and beard: the old Daddyroarer was a very hairy person, and they found upon his legs and arms so many hairs of the thickness of a large-sized rope, that by turning their attention to these limbs and to other parts of his body, they multiplied many times over the links by which they gradually bound him more and more securely to mother earth.

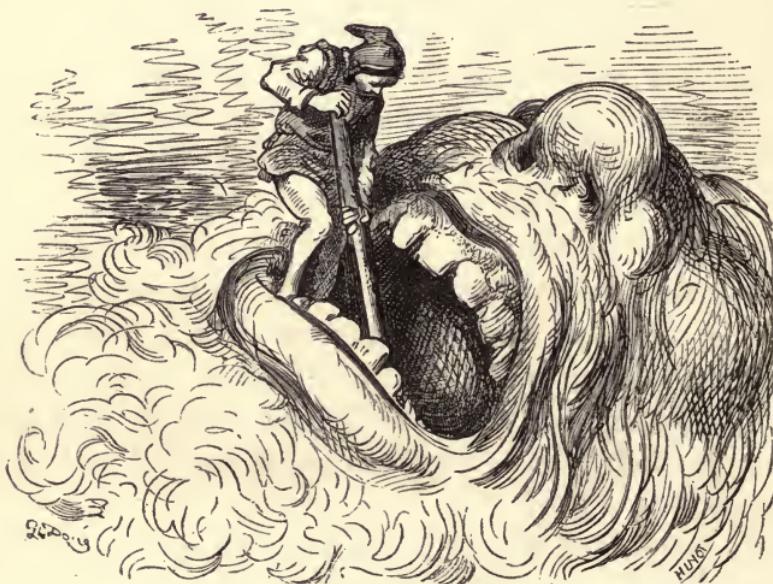
“ Meanwhile the other three volunteers were actively

engaged in an occupation if possible still more dangerous. It was the mouth of the giant upon which Hans had always known he should have to make his great attempt. For should every other part of his huge frame be brought under subjection and his mouth left free, the direst consequences might be apprehended. His roars might bring to his assistance others of his kind from a distance; and even if this did not actually occur, the whole population of the country would be alarmed, if indeed the volunteers themselves were not deafened and rendered senseless by the sound. It was bad enough even when they commenced, for the snores of the sleeping giant were like very loud thunder, closer to the earth than common, or the roar of many cannons in some great conflict of human armies. Luckily, however, he only snored at intervals, between which much could be done, and by carefully filling their ears with cotton wool, the four men were able to proceed with their task, the noise being somewhat deadened by this wise precaution.

“Hans, armed with a long spear sharpened at both ends, boldly entered the mouth first. It was as dark as an oven, and almost as hot, whilst the odour was far less agreeable, as the monster liked his venison high, and had eaten rather an unusual quantity that day. In fact, from time to time the men were obliged to creep out, faint and sick, and take a whiff of fresh air and a drop of brandy before they could go on with their work. Hans carefully placed his long spear in such a position between the jaws that they could not possibly be closed upon him. He was obliged to be exceedingly careful in climbing round and over the teeth, which were of such

size, length, and sharpness, that to traverse them was like climbing over a wall with enormously long pointed iron spikes at the top of it. In fact, but for the circumstance of the existence of various holes and crevices through which he could creep, Hans would have found his task even more difficult than was actually the case.

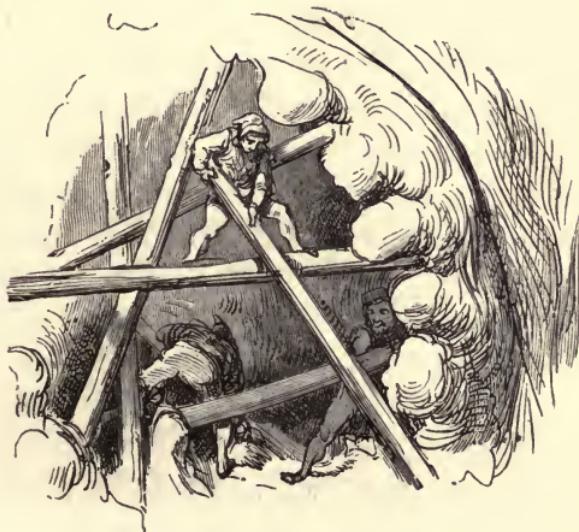
“His three companions, meanwhile, had provided



Hans in the Giant's Mouth.

themselves with a great quantity of beams, joists, rafters, and all other necessary articles for the purpose which they intended to accomplish. They set to work with great zeal to fortify the giant's mouth after a novel fashion, fixing strong beams of oak between the teeth, and building in planks of oak and fir so as to create a fixed and strong roof within the mouth which no power could remove save in the same manner by which it had

been erected, namely, by carpenters' work performed by skilful operators. As the darkness of the interior of the mouth rendered it difficult to work therein, the workmen, who became bolder after they had worked for some time without interruption, fetched a lantern, which Hans carefully hung from one of the beams, and, by the assistance of its light, the work proceeded more rapidly ; and after a time the four men arrived at the conclusion that



The Mouth Fortified.

there was little more to do in order to secure the object for which they had undertaken their hazardous task.

“Accordingly they all left the mouth, except their valiant leader, who now struck a severe blow upon the tongue of the giant with a fragment of beam, in order to awake and summon him to surrender. Such, however, was the thickness of the monster's skin, that even upon this most sensitive part a second and harder blow was necessary before the desired effect could be produced.

Having dealt this with all his force, Hans went forth and stood upon the protruding lip of the giant, whence he was presently hurled down once more upon his breast, as the huge frame trembled and, with a sigh, the monster awoke. Hans was speedily upon his legs again, climbed at once boldly through the beard and whiskers of his prostrate enemy, and standing upon the lower part of his cheek, and elevating his lantern, shouted at the top of his voice, 'You vile old murdering Daddy-roarer! surrender yourself as my prisoner. Villain, you shall now pay dearly for all the mischief you have done, and the innocent lives which you have sacrificed. Monster, you must die!'

"Old Bramble-buffer, half asleep and half awake, at first made no response whatever to this appeal, which, in fact, he scarcely heard. Neither could he see the individual by whom he was addressed; all he heard was a noise as of a shrill penny trumpet close to his ear, and it was some few seconds before he recovered his senses sufficiently to make out what was said to him. All he saw was the feeble ray of a lantern, and he waited for awhile in hopeless confusion. Then, at last, he perceived the strange little figure which had addressed him in so haughty a tone, and for an instant a feeling of contemptuous mirth took possession of his soul. This, however, did not last long, for Hans spoke again.

"'You don't believe you are captive, don't you?' he cried. 'Just try to move, you old beggar, will you, and you'll soon know the rights of it!'

"Bramble-buffer, on hearing these words, immediately followed the advice which they gave, but found that he was so firmly secured to the ground by more

than half the hairs of his head and body, that he could not move an inch. Then he tried to roar, or at all events to speak to his vanquisher, and discover what it all meant, but found himself totally unable to do so. His mouth was so carefully and solidly fortified, that he could no more close it than fly, and he found that he was completely and absolutely in the power of those who had taken advantage of his sleep to make him a helpless captive.

“As soon as he saw that the giant was aware of his condition, Hans carefully kicked him on the nostril, and went on to say, ‘Now, you old rascal, you will have time to repent, perhaps, but no more. The crows and ravens will soon come and pick out your eyes, and the wolves and other animals for whom the flesh of an old giant is not too strong, will doubtless make an end of you before long. If, however, these should not arrive soon, you may starve here as comfortably as you can, and die of hunger at your leisure.’ With these words the little tailor stamped violently on the old Daddy-roarer’s cheek, and laughed scornfully as he did so.

“Perfectly helpless, overcome with sorrow at his miserable condition, and struck with horror at the melancholy and wretched fate which he saw impending, Bramble-buffer could bear up no longer, but burst into tears, in doing which he very nearly destroyed his conqueror, who would certainly have been washed away by the strain which suddenly came gushing down the cheek on which he was standing, had he not with his wonted agility jumped on one side, and swung himself off by the whiskers on to the ground.

“Seeing his enemy thus completely prostrate in body

and soul, and evidently perfectly conscious of the helplessness of his position, the acute brain of Hans began immediately to consider whether there might not be some better way of turning the giant to account than by either killing him or leaving him to die, especially as there would be considerable practical inconvenience in getting rid of so huge a carcase, which would moreover attract all the wolves, foxes, vultures, crows, and other



The Giant weeps.

disagreeable animals from far and near, and render the place unbearable for months to come. A happy thought struck him, and he instantly struck the giant in consequence, climbing back again on to his lip in order to do so. ‘Listen to me, Daddyroarer!’ he cried at the top of his voice. ‘You can purchase your life if you wish it. What do you say to that?’

“Fastened as he was, and unable to speak or move his mouth, the old fellow could only signify his delight

by winking his eyes, which he forthwith did with as much expression as could be expected from a person of his intellectual capacity. Hans perfectly understood that an affirmative reply was intended, and he thus proceeded to explain his meaning to the giant. ‘Now, look here, old chap! you must confess that you have been a regular ruffian: destroying crops, throwing down houses, bagging sheep and cattle, stamping upon people who never did *you* any harm, and generally playing Old Harry with the whole country. Now, if I and my mates let you off this time, and spare your life, you must vow, promise, and solemnly declare that you will do just exactly the reverse and opposite of all you have hitherto done. You must watch over the interests of mankind, and, in fact, you must be our slave, perform the tasks which we shall impose upon you, and yield a ready and implicit obedience to all commands which shall be laid upon you by properly constituted authorities among mankind, from the Emperor of Germany down to the parish constable. If you’re game for this, old fellow, wink your eye again, and it’s a bargain.’

“It may perhaps be objected to our hero Hans, Brother Thames, that his language was somewhat of what is termed a ‘slang’ character; but if critics make, as critics will, such remarks, they should remember that, in the days of which I am speaking, tailors were not, as now, upon an equality with educated gentlemen, and their language was not unnaturally somewhat less polished and refined than might otherwise have been the case. I should willingly put into the mouth of Hans expressions of a nature better calculated to please the superlatively well-conditioned gentlemen who, in these

days when all men are equal, speak with acknowledged accuracy of taste and grammar, whether they chance to have been half, wholly, or not at all educated, and cannot endure in the mouths of others anything which falls short of their own high standard ; but I speak of things and people as they really were in those old days, and I cannot alter the truth for anybody.

“ Hans was only a tailor, and perhaps a little vulgar into the bargain, and he certainly accosted the old giant with more slang expressions and less respect than his age and rank might have entitled him to expect. So it was, however, and, what is more, the result was the same as it would probably have been if Hans had used other and better language to express his meaning.

“ Old Bramble-buffer no sooner heard the conditions imposed than he winked his eye again without the smallest hesitation, in order to signify that he agreed to the bargain. Upon this our friend Hans immediately summoned his companions, who came at once, and, being ordered by him to do so, climbed upon the face of the still-prostrate foe, and, at Hans’ further commands, took up the positions which he indicated. Three of them sat quietly upon his forehead, whilst two others sat, one over each of his eyes, holding in their hands a sharp dagger which they kept suspended just above his eyelids.

“ ‘Now, old boy,’ shouted Hans again, right into the ear of the giant, ‘look here ; I am going to keep my part of the bargain, and begin to set you free. If, when your mouth is open, you cry out for help, or say or do anything unpleasant, straight into your eyes go these two daggers, and you will find that you will fare

much worse than if you had kept your word. As soon as your voice is free, you will swear the Big Oath of the giants to be the slave of our people henceforth, and you shall then be set free from the other bonds by which you are now constrained.'

"Having said these words, Hans boldly descended



The Giant's Release.

once more into the huge mouth of his former enemy, accompanied by his remaining companions, who carried a lantern. Then, taking up his spear, which he had removed from its position in the giant's jaws as soon as the beams and rafters had been all fixed and securely built in, he carefully moved one of these, which was the

key to the whole edifice, and then, jumping out of the mouth, told the owner thereof that he could do the rest himself. This, indeed, was the case, for with a vigorous crunch of his jaws, Bramble-buffer now smashed beams, rafters, joists, and planks all into one shapeless mass, which he forthwith spat out of his mouth as fast as he could, and afterwards indulged in a long, deep sigh of relief. It was a moment of agonizing suspense to the men. Suppose the giant should play false? They might indeed put out his eyes, but his roars would probably bring other giants to his aid before long, and, when free, his vengeance would be terrible. A very few seconds, however, put an end to their doubts, and dissipated all their fears. The race of giants are a curious combination of good and evil, and if the latter generally predominates, it is really not so much from natural or inherent vice as from defective education, there being a sad want of elementary schools among giants, and few people big enough to undertake the instruction of their youth. But no well-born giant of average respectability breaks the great giant oath, and this was what Bramble-buffer had promised to take. Nor was he false to his promise: as soon as he had recovered his powers of speech, his very first words were as follows, pronounced in rhyme, doubtless for the sake of emphasis:—

‘ By the mountains of the earth;
By the ground which gave me birth;
By the streams which here do flow;
By the cots I’ve oft laid low;
By the woods and forests great;
By the woven web of Fate;
By the waters of the Rhine,
Swear I now this oath of mine:—

War with man henceforth t' eschew,
To their cause for e'er be true,
All their mandates to obey,
Willing slave by night or day,
To their will submissive bow,
Since they grant my freedom now !'

" It is but doing justice to the estimation in which the character of the giants as vow-keepers stood, to say that from the moment that old Bramble-buffer pronounced these words, not one of the seven heroes who stood on and about his face at the time of his dozing had the smallest fear for themselves, or for those to whom he had just vowed obedience. They felt, on the contrary, such entire confidence in the moral probity of their old enemy, and in his honest intention to observe his oath in the most religious manner, that they immediately threw down their daggers (in such a reckless manner as might have proved serious to the face of the old giant if they had not fortunately fallen in his whiskers), and proceeded without delay to climb down and set free the hairs which they had so securely fastened with cords and ropes. Little by little they separated those disagreeable knots and ties, and the emancipated Bramble-buffer at last rose once more from the ground a free giant.

" As soon as he was upon his legs, the first thing he did was to shake himself violently, and in so doing cause the earth to tremble beneath him as from the shock of an earthquake. He then spoke humbly to Hans, and asked his will; but as in doing this he employed his ordinary voice, which was not unlike thunder, his conqueror made the first use of his power by desiring his slave to speak in a whisper for the

future, unless he should happen to be standing at a great distance from the person addressed. He next directed the captive Bramble-buffer to carry him and his companions to the cave in which they had left the rest of the mortals. This cave was formed out of rocks, close to the vast ruins of an ancient castle, which at some distant time had been built in a very strong position, but which age or giants had long ago partially demolished. In front of the cave huge rocks jutted out on all sides, and on a plateau of rock there came out several of the mortals to receive Hans and his prisoner, as soon as the news had spread that they were near at hand.

“ Bramble-buffer had meekly obeyed the commands of his master, and brought him and his six volunteers safely to the place they desired. Then Hans, having directed that he should be placed upon a table of rock just opposite that on which the other mortals were standing, and which was about on a level with the giant’s head as he stood below, introduced their new slave to his fellow-men, and related to them the perils and adventures through which he and his six friends had passed, and the successful issue to which they had brought the affair which had been entrusted to them. Upon this the men all set up a shout of joy, as they gazed with unfeigned delight upon their old enemy, humbled and brought low as he was.

“ Then there followed the usual course of action in such matters. Everybody praised Hans, and everybody pretended that *they* had known his talents, skill, and bravery from the first, and had always been in favour of the expedition which he had planned and executed.

One would have thought that the old gentleman, at least, would have remained silent, but this was far from being the case. On the contrary, he was foremost in offering his congratulations to the triumphant Hans, and even went so far as to say that he could not help taking some credit to himself in the matter, for that, highly approving of his scheme from the first moment he heard it, and being most anxious for its success, he had known that a little pretended opposition was the only way to get up a feeling in favour of it among the general throng, and had therefore spoken doubtfully in order to secure this result. His wisdom, he added, had been amply justified; Hans had succeeded as he, the old gentleman, had always known he must and would succeed, and he hoped he would ever be grateful to those whose age and experience had assisted him at the first beginning of the affair.

“Hans listened with respectful attention to this speech, and to many of a similar character from that large class of persons who always tell one after an event has happened that they perfectly well knew it would occur, and had often prophesied it beforehand. He did not deem it necessary to make any answer, but accepted all the compliments offered him with becoming modesty, and told his friends plainly that he had acted for the general benefit, and was very thankful that success had crowned his efforts. Many rewards were, of course, bestowed upon the hero: he was made a knight of several orders, which conferred the right to wear certain stars and crosses at court, which was accounted a great privilege in those days, and was all the more valued because it was always so uncertain to

whom it would be given, some persons who had done nothing to deserve it being frequently thus decorated, while others were left out who had fairly earned it by service rendered to the public. But everybody rejoiced in the honours showered upon Sir Hans, and tailoring immediately grew fashionable and has so continued ever since.

“ From that time forth there is but little of interest to relate to you concerning the giant Bramble-buffer. He honestly and diligently performed his duty to his masters, making and altering mountains for them when required, holding a gigantic umbrella over particular crops which the rain would have damaged when a storm happened to break over them, and performing very many other offices for the performance of which brute strength was required. In short, he proved a most faithful, useful, and obedient servant, never grumbled at being required to rise early, complained of his victuals, or said that, ‘it wasn’t his place’ to do any particular service asked of him, but did his duty like a true and good giant, and was consequently happy and contented during the whole of his remaining life. I cannot tell you precisely when that life terminated, but I rather fancy his head got confused when two great nations took to quarrelling as to which of them had the best claim to my river, and consequently to the giant who served the population of the country near, and if this absurdity on the part of mortals turned with them into madness, it is not a matter of surprise that the same disease fell upon the less powerful intellect of the poor giant, and that he put an end to himself when, like the nations themselves, he was labouring under ‘temporary insanity.’ At all events, I have told you his legend

as far as it has been well authenticated, and will now leave you to pass your opinion thereupon."

"A good tale, indeed, Brother Rhine," remarked Father Thames at the conclusion of this story.

"I am glad you approve of it," replied the other. "Have you never had giants of this kind in your own country, Brother Thames?"

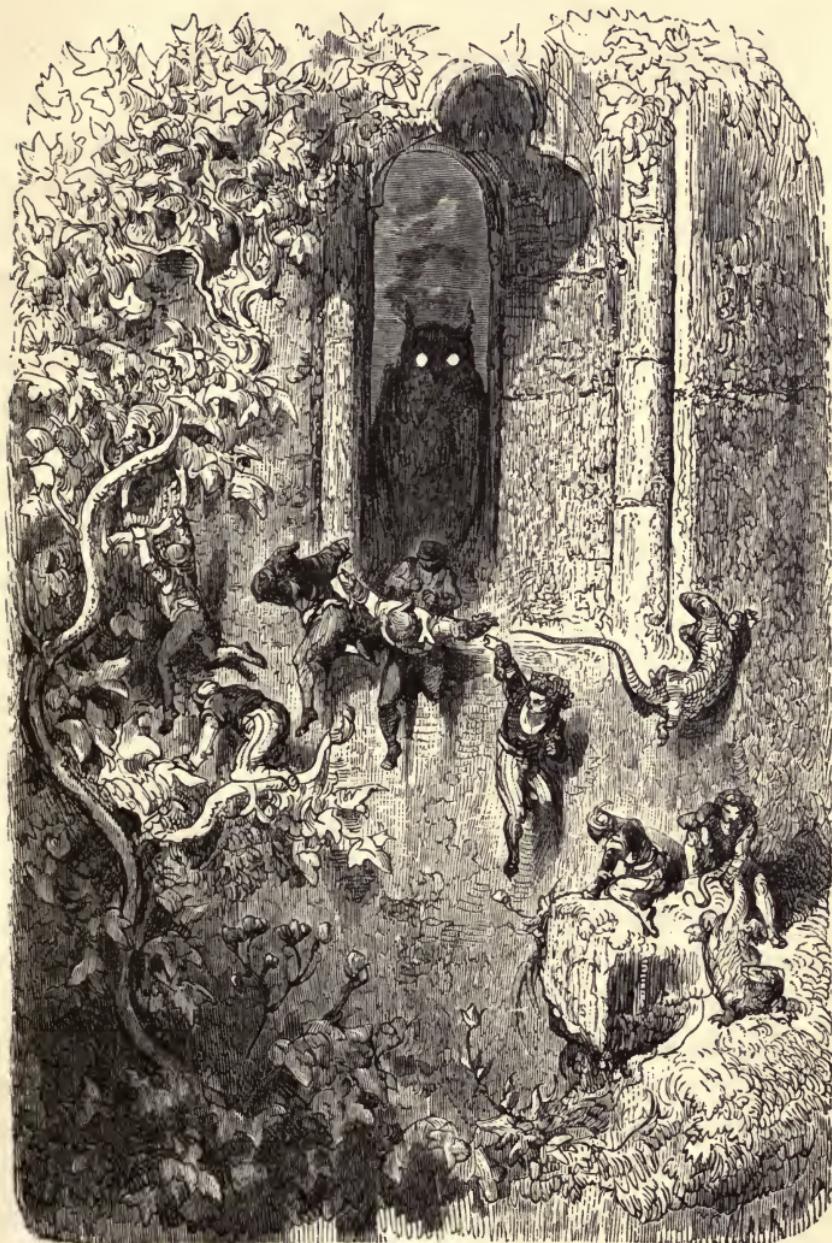
Thus addressed, the old king pondered for awhile, and then made answer as follows:—"Yes, we have had giants, of one sort or another, in old England, but rarely of the size, and scarce even of the mischievous character, of your Daddyroarers. But since you have told me a tale of the giant, let me give you a legend of the small people;" and so saying Father Thames commenced the history of—

The Mannikins' Castle.

I don't pretend, Brother Rhine, to have as many haunted castles upon my banks as you have on and about the sides of your famous river. I have always denied that the chief merit of a castle consists in its being haunted, and the simple-minded people who inhabit this old England of ours look to the circumstance of their houses being comfortable to live in, free from draughts and bad smells, large enough to entertain their friends, and possessed of good kitchen arrangements, rather than to their being the residence of any supernatural beings such as those of which you and your castles appear to be so proud. Moreover I have often observed that the presence of such creatures is constantly connected with the commission of some

frightful crime at a distant period of time, the perpetrator of which appears desirous to perpetuate its memory by haunting the place where it was performed as much as he or she conveniently can. We islanders, on the contrary, when any of us happen to commit a crime, prefer that it should be forgotten as soon as possible, and think it very indecent and improper of any member of a respectable family who may have distinguished himself in the paths of vice if he seeks to keep up the remembrance thereof, and throw a stain upon the escutcheon of his house by coming back again to earth after he has once left it for the benefit of the survivors. There are exceptions, of course, to this rule, but I state what I believe to be the popular feeling here upon the subject; and although I am going to tell you a story which concerns a castle, and also beings not strictly mortal or ordinary, I may at once tell you that, so far as I know, no murder was ever committed there, and no ghost or demon of an unpleasant character ever entered the place, except under the casual circumstances which I shall presently relate.

It was an old castle, however; a *very* old castle, built much more massively than the structures of modern times, and full of curious old bits of wall, over which antiquaries would puzzle nowadays to determine their date, and having here and there wonderful windows with huge stone mullions set into the great, deep walls, and apparently built with the intention of lasting until the end of the world. In the chief window of this old ruin—for a ruin it was at the time of my story—there habitually sat a large black owl, who was generally supposed to be the lord and ruler of the place. Perhaps



The Castle.

he was a spirit if one only knew it, but as no one *did*

know it, it never entered anybody's head to say so. He was hardly mortal though, for he not only hooted like an ordinary owl, but spoke like a Christian; at least so I suppose, or how would he have made himself understood by other beings who were *not* owls, and who yet had to communicate with him? For beings more extraordinary than owls inhabited the old castle. A large number of mannikins had taken possession of it some years after its abandonment by mortals, and here the merry little creatures would sport and gambol all the livelong day. They used to clamber about the strong ivy-trees that grew up the sides of the old walls, playing at hide and seek among the thick leaves, and making the place re-echo with their joyous shouts. They were wont to sport and play with the large lizards which basked upon the walls when the sun came out with rays bright and strong, and warm enough to tempt them to do so, and they would scamper up and down the whole place, trying their skill in ascending and descending the steepest and most perpendicular places in the old walls, where the stone was crumbling away from sheer age, and where no being of mortal frame and mould could have found a secure footing for a moment. Oh, they were merry little chaps, those mannikins!

Within the precincts of the castle itself, in the ancient courtyards which once reverberated with the shrill blast of trumpets calling men forth to war; where men-at-arms formerly strode boldly along, filled with warlike ardour, and where martial sounds rang out loud and oft in the days of old, grass was now growing long and rank, which was trodden under foot only by the lively mannikins in their daily and nightly dances, whilst their shrill and merry cries replaced those sterner sounds which had

long since ceased, and those who had caused them had passed for ever from mortal ken and mortal vision. All was indeed changed; but I am not prepared to say that the change was not for the better, for I was never fond of the old feudal times myself; and the barons who used to possess such castles, and send forth their retainers to fight, were much more troublesome people to the world at large, and their neighbours in particular, than were the little mannikins who played around the old place, or the wise old owl who blinked his eyes cosily and comfortably in the stone window.

You would have thought that such innocent creatures as owls and mannikins could have had no enemies, but must have been on good terms with all their fellow-creatures of every description. True, they sometimes made themselves disagreeable in the way of taking new-laid eggs from farmyards which were within temptingly easy reach of their own abode, and now and then they were shrewdly suspected of having milked a cow with which they had no business, and stolen cream when the dairymaid had been careless enough to leave the dairy-door unlocked. In these particulars, though, they were, after all, no worse than mortals have frequently been, and in fact not half so bad, inasmuch as they made what return they could to the country people who might have now and then suffered from their depredations, sometimes going out in the moonlight nights and making their hay for them or finishing the cutting of a corn-field, and even condescending so far, on more than one occasion, as to sweep a chimney and thoroughly dust a kitchen floor. For they were very active little fellows, those mannikins, and could turn their hands to almost anything if they saw fit to do so.

They had some enemies no doubt, in wild and evil-disposed animals, for they loved to warn the lamb when the wolf was lying in wait for him, and often saved the poultry by a timely notice that the fox was coming, whereby they incurred the wrath and hatred of these midnight marauders. But the chief and principal of their enemies were the witches, who have during all ages been a plague to this otherwise favoured land. I say advisedly, in all ages, because this is indeed the truth, although in their form and shape, as well as in their method of doing mischief, persons of this class have wonderfully changed. In old times they were generally of repulsive appearance, oftentimes clad in a red cloak, generally with a stick in one hand, and almost invariably humpbacked or misshapen in some way, and attended by a familiar in the shape of a cat. They were consulted only on serious affairs, or when somebody wanted to be revenged upon somebody else; they were malicious in their words and actions; hated everything good, respectable, and handsome; and, if possible, transformed it as soon as they could into something quite the reverse. Nowadays, our English witches are entirely different: their shape is usually beautiful, their figure perfect, their eyes bright and full of expression, and their dress made in admirable good taste and after an exceedingly becoming fashion. They have no familiar spirit, and the best of them allow no one to be too familiar with them; neither do they change the form and shape of mankind into those of hideous creatures, but, on the contrary, rather prefer that men should be handsome and well shaped; but they still exercise over them an almost resistless sway, which, however, is far

more willingly obeyed than was the power of the witches of the old times; and they are now consulted, not so much on matters of hate and revenge, as on those which concern feelings far more desirable to be cherished in the human breast.

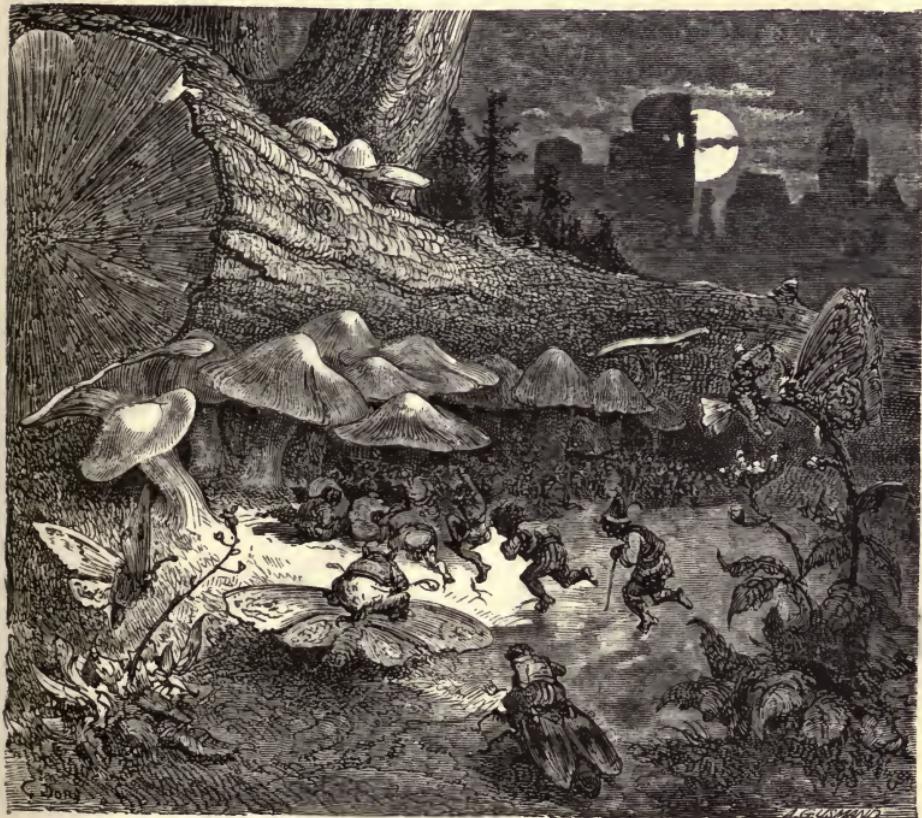
But the witches of whom I have to speak to-day hated the mannikins as much as a certain person is said to hate holy water. The reason of this was sufficiently obvious, and arose from the entire and radical difference between the views of the two sets of beings. The mannikins were, as I have said, although mischievous, the friends of mankind; the witches were the enemies of everything human which was not as wicked as themselves: the mannikins found pleasure in the most innocent amusements; the witches had no satisfaction in anything which did not injure or give pain to somebody else: the mannikins were gay and cheerful, the witches dull and morose, save when under the influence of strong drink: the mannikins generally ran about on their own legs; the witches habitually rode broomsticks, or toads, or whatever else came in their way and could be made to serve as a horse—in fine, the mannikins and witches did not, could not, and were never likely to, agree upon any one point or in any one feature of resemblance, and therefore it was not unnatural that they should be animated by feelings of hostility the one against the other. I am bound to say, however, that the mannikins never wished to interfere with or annoy the witches, and would have been well content to keep out of their way altogether if they could only have managed to do so. It was the witches who *went* out of *their* way to tease and bully the mannikins whenever they could, and who

were entirely responsible for all the troubles which occurred in consequence.

Not far from the owl's castle was a large forest, in which all kinds of creatures dwelt, and of which the little people from the castle made great and frequent use. They dearly loved to wander amongst the enormous trees, climbing over their branches, and playing around their gigantic trunks. One tree in particular there was which they held very precious. It had fallen down, and lay in the forest, covering a prodigious space of ground. On, under, and around it, wherever they could do so, the little mannikins planted a large number of fungi, under which they sought shelter from the rays of the sun or the pelting of the storm, and which they called their summer palace. Here they would spend hour after hour when the weather was favourable, and I have often wandered up from my river to have a sly peep at the merry little creatures sporting and playing whilst the distant moon shone upon them from afar, lighting up the walls of the old castle in the distance, and bathing with a flood of light the forest and fallen tree and the mannikins' playground around the latter. There they would be, sure enough, night after night, running one after the other round the tree and under the fungi, having sometimes coaxed a butterfly or two, a big blue-bottle fly, or some other lively insect, to sit up with them and make a night of it.

One would have thought that it would have been scarcely worth the witches' while to have troubled themselves with these harmless people, when there was so much more mischief of a practical character to be done in the world without. But there is no accounting for

tastes, and when the evil passion of malice once seizes upon any one, whether mortal or witch, no one can tell to what extremities it will lead. Accordingly, several of the most notorious witches in that part of the country



Mannikins at Play.

(and ever since England was a country, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire have been the favourite abodes of witches) resolved to harass and worry the mannikins by every means within their power.

Dame Stokes, Mother Wandle, and old Goody Tickle-

back were the names of the three principal plotters, and a rare bad lot they were when you came to know them. Dame Stokes lived at Datchet, whence she generally sallied forth upon one of the biggest broomsticks ever known in that part of the country; Mother Wandle frequently assumed the shape of a large bat, under which



Goody Tickleback's Steed.

disguise she flitted about all over the country; whilst Goody Tickleback, who resided not far from the playing-fields at Eton, habitually rode the carcase of a fearful antediluvian monster whose skeleton she had found in some queer place, and which, animated by her particular evil spirit, made her a capital horse, and struck

terror into the souls of all those who were unfortunate enough to see it. These foul creatures, having secured the aid of others as bad as themselves, determined to root out the family of mannikins if they possibly could, or at all events drive them once for all from the castle and its neighbourhood.

They first endeavoured to obtain as allies the nymphs who frequented my banks, coming down oftentimes to bathe from their homes in the shady recesses of Windsor Forest, where their dances were most beautiful to behold, showing off their graceful figures to perfection, and making me anxious that they should become permanent residents within the waters of my river. These ladies, however, would have nothing to say to the witches, whom they declared to be frightful as well as disreputable people, not fit for the society of well-conducted females who had any respect for themselves. They stated, moreover, that, in their opinion, the mannikins had done nothing for which they deserved to be punished, but were inoffensive and gentlemanlike little people, who ought rather to be encouraged than the reverse. Then the witches tried to cajole my elves, and to persuade them to splash, duck, and, if possible, drown their enemies when they came down to play upon the river banks. But the elves were exceedingly indignant at the request, remarking that the witches had nothing whatever to do with *them*, whilst the mannikins were their first cousins once removed, and that "blood was thicker than water."

So, as they could get no other allies, the old hags were obliged to content themselves with the snakes and bats, the inferior class of toads, rats, hedgehogs, and

other low-lived and despicable animals. And, first of all, they determined to try and get rid of the old owl, who was the guardian and protector of the mannikins, and the extent of whose power was very little known. So they began by spreading all kinds of false and wicked reports about the worthy bird. They caused it to be said that he had been seen carrying off young chickens, that he had been detected in robbing several pheasants' nests, and that his private life was no better than it should be. Unfortunately, however, for the success of this scheme, the owl took no newspapers and saw no company. Consequently, he never heard or read of the reports in question, and therefore of course never took the trouble to contradict them. The result was that, as is usually the case under similar circumstances, people, seeing that the individual attacked took no notice of what was said, thought they had better take the same course, and the reports dropped gradually out of circulation, until no one believed them at all.

It was thus made evident to the witches that they must resort to more active measures if they desired to disturb the owl. So they poisoned a young rabbit, and put it near the window in which the ancient bird commonly sat. But the owl was too many for them. A fox came and looked at the rabbit, but having done so, although its appearance was tender and tempting, he winked his eye and passed on. Then the owl slowly raised his claws to his beak, chuckled a little in a sepulchral tone, and told a couple of mannikins to bury that carcass out of the way, and watch any one who came and brought such an article again, and, if possible, bring them to his presence.

It was plain that the owl was not to be caught asleep, and the witches must betake themselves to some new plan. So they sent for some hawks, and persuaded them that the owl was the natural and terrible enemy of their race, and that by a combined attack upon him, they might get rid of him at once and for ever. The hawks went to take a look at the bird and the place, and, after a careful inspection, came to the conclusion that there was nothing to be gained by attacking either. Their eyes were so sharp, that they saw through the plan of the witches, and were perfectly certain that they had some end of their own in view. So they told the old ladies that they had been entirely mistaken in the matter, that the owl was by no means a bad sort of person, and that they could not interfere in any way in the private quarrels of other people.

Disappointed at this, the three witches next went to the jays, and easily succeeded in inducing these mischievous birds to make such a frightful and discordant screaming around the owl's abode as would, in all probability, oblige him to leave it. But the owl did no such thing. He simply told the mannikins to tell the jays that unless their noise instantly ceased, and was not again renewed, a birdsnesting party should be organized by the little people as soon as ever the nesting season should arrive, and that every jay in or near the wood should have to deplore the loss of eggs and young. This was most alarming news to the jays, who knew pretty well that the owl had full power to carry out his threat, and that if he did so, the mannikins, who had eyes like needles, and could climb with so much ease and agility, would certainly take every jay's egg in the place, and

thus wreak a fearful vengeance on the disturbers of their monarch's rest. So the birds desisted forthwith from their noise, and observed that they had only done it for a "lark," and meant no harm; to which the wise bird replied, that there was a great difference between an owl and a lark, which difference they had better fully recognise before troubling him again in such a manner.

Still the witches would not desist from their attempt to obtain, by secret cunning, the result which they feared to seek by open attack. They hired bats to flit around the castle walls by night, with the intention of pulling out the owl's tail and wing-feathers, and thus crippling him in his sleep, when he might be attacked with less fear of evil consequences to the aggressors. The attempt, however, miserably failed. The worthy bats, who really belonged to the castle, had experienced such great and unvarying kindness from the owl, that they had neither reason nor desire to prove faithless to him. They easily and immediately detected the strange birds who entered the precincts of the castle, and, having forced them to declare the object of their intrusion, drove them out with blows and insults, so that they retired in the utmost confusion.

Then the witches began to see that the owl was not to be outwitted by cunning, or destroyed by fraud. War, open war, was the only resource left; and the next question would be how it could be carried on with the best chance of success. They had the impudence to send a deputation of little witchlings to me, calmly asking me to overflow and put the castle and its grounds under water, so that it might become too damp for the mannikins to dwell in any longer. This, however, I

naturally refused to do, having much better use to make of the waters of my river than to employ them upon any such purpose to suit the pleasure of such low and wicked creatures, and, moreover, I told them that, if they dared to come to me any more with such base proposals, I would drown half-a-dozen of them by way of teaching them manners.

They retired somewhat discomfited ; but, knowing that I was too good-natured to do them any injury as long as they left me quiet, very soon came down to my banks again, and entered into successful negotiations with a large number of water-rats. These creatures they hired, with a bribe of moorhens' eggs, which they took from the poor birds in a cruel and reckless manner, to join with a number of land-rats in an attack upon the castle. The rat-contingent was to unite on the banks of the river, and thence to advance upon the castle through that part of the wood which lay nearest the stream. They were to be supported by a strong auxiliary force of frogs and toads of the worst character, and a body of snakes would simultaneously creep upon the doomed place from the other side. A number of bats, hooded crows, night-hawks, and such evil birds and beasts as they could obtain for the service, would constitute the reserve, which the three witches themselves would command in person. The plan was that the castle should be invested on all sides at once by the noxious reptiles and animals which constituted the witches' army, and that a bold, and it was hoped decisive, effort should be made to destroy the whole race of mannikins.

Some difficulty was experienced from the fact of the frogs, toads, and rats objecting to fight side by side with

the snakes, who were not averse to them as food, and might perhaps remember their natural instincts if overtaken by hunger in the hour of battle. The witches had foreseen this probable objection on the part of the weaker animals, and took measures to remove it without delay. Each of them was made to pass before the great witch, Goody Tickleback, who dropped upon the body of every one a single drop of magic fluid of extraordinary virtue, which was warranted to prevent the creature so touched from being eaten by any other. As she performed this strange process, she pronounced these words :—

“ This wondrous sign of magic art
From hurting thee each snake shall stop
For forty hours. If out of heart,
Come back and take another drop.”

This went on until the whole of that part of the army which had entertained fears, founded upon the habits and natures of those with whom they were about to serve as comrades, had passed before the witch, and been treated in the manner which I have described.

All now seemed ready, and at the appointed time the attacking force moved forward in the order which had been previously arranged. It was a lovely evening ; not a breath was stirring in the sky above, the moon was shining clearly, and everything was calm and peaceful, save the hearts of the wicked creatures who were plotting and endeavouring to accomplish the utter ruin and destruction of the innocent mannikins. They, meanwhile, would very likely have been taken by surprise if they had been left to their own unassisted strength. Such was the simplicity of their nature, that they sus-

pected no evil, even when preparations against them were being made so actively and openly that they might easily have guessed that mischief was brewing. Nevertheless, they paid no attention whatever to what was going on, but played about just the same as usual until the enemy had matured his plans and was almost ready for action. Then, indeed, they were roused by the wise and powerful protector whose authority they acknowledged.

The owl summoned them from their sports upon the very day for which the witches had appointed the assault upon the castle, and informed them that they must prepare to defend themselves against an enemy who was about to attack them. He gave minute instructions as to what was to be done, and how the castle was to be saved, if possible, from its enemies; and pointed out to his subjects that upon the result of the combat their happiness for the future, nay, their very lives, depended. Should the witches be successful, the mannikins would be either killed or driven away, unless, indeed, they suffered the still worse fate of being taken prisoners, in which case they would probably be transformed into ugly and loathsome creatures by their victorious enemies, whom they would have to serve in abject and miserable slavery for the remainder of their existence. It therefore behoved them to be up and stirring, in order to save themselves and their friends from so cruel a fate.

The little people required no further words in order to awaken their martial enthusiasm: they had already suffered enough from the cruel and unprovoked enmity of the witches, and this daring attempt to destroy their

beloved home and themselves was enough to excite the spirit of the quietest and most peaceable mannikin. So without delay they began their preparations for resistance to the coming attack, and implicitly obeyed the directions of their monarch in each and every particular. They were hurrying to and fro all the day, but by nightfall all was ready, and the inhabitants of the castle awaited with calmness and confidence the approach of the hostile army.

The wood around the castle seemed alive that night. The eyes of the numerous creeping animals glittered like fireballs as they crawled through the leaves, and the rustling of the bats' wings sounded like the wind among the trees as they hastened forward. On all sides the castle was surrounded by its enemies, and the witches gave the signal for an immediate assault. With marvellous rapidity the snakes glided in at every hole and crevice of the old walls; the rats scampered up them in every direction, squeaking violently; whilst the hoarse croaking of the frogs, mingled with the spitting of the toads, sounded fearfully through the forest in the stillness of that summer's night.

The attacking party found their first obstacle to be one of an unexpected character. Hardly had any of the snakes insinuated his wriggling body into a hole before he found that it was in every instance full of minute fragments of broken glass, with the sharp points upwards, which so lacerated his skin that he could hardly move backwards or forwards without considerable pain, and some of those who had dashed forward with the greatest impetuosity, so injured themselves in the passage that they never reached the interior of the castle,

but remained fixed in the holes which they had attempted to pass, lingering until sunset next day (at which time alone snakes can die), and then perishing miserably. The rats found a similar difficulty, but, being resolute and crafty, ran over the walls where they could not creep through, and arrived in the courtyard of the castle without losing any considerable number of their forces. But the toads and frogs had a rough time of it. To them it would have been a long and tedious business to climb over the walls, and the few breaches which were left temptingly open and undefended on their side of the attack were the only mode of entrance which they could try with any hopes of success. These, however, were entirely flooded with liquid tar, which the mannikins had poured with great care upon the flat stones and hard ground, and which caused the attacking party the greatest possible difficulty, a great many of them remaining fast stuck in the disagreeable mixture, until death by starvation terminated their sufferings. After a time, however, by dint of clambering over each other's bodies, a large number of them succeeded in obtaining an entrance, and the courtyards of the castle were filled with noxious creatures of all sorts.

All this time not a mannikin had shown himself, and no visible sign, other than the obstacles which I have mentioned, had been given that the castle was defended by any one. The witches, who of course were close at hand, scarcely liked the ominous silence which prevailed on the part of their enemies; there was something mysterious about it which they did not understand. They knew, however, that their friends within must not be left unsupported, and accordingly sounded the ad-

vance of the reserve. Mother Wandle, heading a large force of bats, flew gallantly forward on one side ; Dame Stokes, with a body of cats and evil animals, charged on the other ; whilst old Goody Tickleback hovered about close by on her awful steed, surrounded by the hooded crows and other wicked birds who had joined the witches' army ; for the wary old woman, who knew more about magic than any of her mates, had her own suspicions as to the possible strength of the powers arrayed against her, and had always determined from the first that she would throw as much of the hard work of fighting as she could upon the others, and, under pretence of keeping a small force in reserve for contingencies, would remain outside the walls of the owl's castle. You will presently judge of her wisdom by the events which followed.

Scarcely had the bats on one side, and the cats on the other, passed the castle walls, when a voice, the loud and clear accents of which were distinctly heard above the cries of the assaulting party, exclaimed, "Light the gas!" and in another moment a blaze of light illuminated the whole place with a brightness beyond that of the sun's own rays. Every corner and crevice was lighted up with wondrous brilliancy, and no concealment was any longer possible for any mortal being. Then, in every niche of the old walls, upon the old staircases, at the windows, and on the crumbling ledges around, a quantity of armed mannikins were seen standing ready for action, whilst one window alone remained unlit and mysteriously dark, and there were those present who knew at that moment, if they had never known before, that the owl who sat in that window was a mighty

magician, and that a Power unseen and unfelt as yet, but too terrible for evil witches and their followers, dwelt within those old walls.

The effect of the light upon the unhappy bats was perfectly marvellous; dazzled and blinded, they knew not what to do nor where to fly; some dashed themselves up against the walls and put an end to their own lives; others flew straight up to the mannikins, and fell an easy prey to the latter, who, with their little swords drawn, stood ready to strike down each foeman as he approached, and dealt stout blows upon the blinded bats who came within their reach. Mother Wandle herself by no means relished her reception; she was nearly overwhelmed by her own retreating forces, and at the same time the light, to which she had a great objection, annoyed her extremely, and she began to consider that her best course would be to retreat as fast as possible. As she did so, however, she felt, to her great disgust and horror, an invisible hand, or rather claw, laid upon her neck, whilst a voice whispered in low but perfectly audible tones close to her ear—

“Vile daughter of evil, who wast not afraid
The mighty Owl’s castle and home to invade,
Do thou and thy sisters look well to this text—
A whipping the first time; beware of the next!”

And, as the voice ceased, the claw was loosened from her neck, and she instantly felt upon her bat’s body severe strokes as of a birch-rod aimed by the strong arm and unerring eye of a resolute head-master: quick and sharp the blows descended upon the luckless old hag, and as the skin of a witch (these creatures being, from the evil consciences which prevent their getting

fat, rarely burdened with much flesh) is proverbially tender, she suffered considerably more than any of my boys here at Eton would have done under similar circumstances. Mother Wandle, however, shrieked and fled as fast as she could, followed by as many of her bats as were destined to escape at all from that ill-fated day.

Dame Stokes and her cats fared but little better on their side. Although the light had not the same effect upon this party as upon the bats, they found it exceedingly disagreeable, whilst there was something else which affected their nerves even in a still greater degree. The mannikins who stood upon a portion of the inner walls of the castle exactly opposite to that outer wall upon which the cats had climbed to the assault, opened upon the latter a fire, so to speak, of a novel character. They had arranged and brought to bear upon this part of the wall several garden watering-engines of great power, numerous squirts, and the special engine of the Windsor Fire Brigade of that day. By means of these instruments they received the invaders with such a continuous volley and volume of water as would have checked persons to whom the element is more agreeable than is the case with cats. These animals have, as is well known to the student of natural history, an instinctive aversion to wetting their fur. Under the peculiar circumstances of the case, they might have put up with a shower of rain, or have endured a casual wetting, followed by facilities for drying themselves immediately afterwards. But to be received by a heavy and violent shower of water right in their faces, drenching them at once through and

through, and being immediately repeated, and continued without any intermission, was more than the bravest cat could bear; and as soon as they found what kind of reception they were to experience, no thought of shame or disgrace deterred the feline contingent from turning tail and retreating as fast as ever they could by the same way they had come, only some twenty or thirty dropping down within the castle wall. As they fled in this manner, the same mysterious voice whispered to Dame Stokes the identical words of warning which had greeted the ears of her sister-witch, Mother Wandle; and although, having assumed no other form than her own, her sex might have protected her from so great an indignity, I grieve to say that precisely the same punishment was administered to the old creature, and that so efficaciously that she presently fled, shrieking and rubbing herself with pain as she left the castle, which she devoutly wished she had never entered.

The results which I have just described occupied barely ten minutes, and within a quarter of an hour the three witches, with their attendant bats, cats, hooded crows, and other animals who had constituted the reserve, were in full flight from the castle. A certain number of the snakes also made their escape in a curious manner. A strange-looking being, in the shape of a man, with a huge vessel before him, had mysteriously appeared near the castle wall just as the assault began, and as soon as it was plain that the day was going against the attacking party, he gathered up as many of the snakes as he could from their painful position on and about the walls, filled the aforesaid vessel with them (handling them all the while with the greatest tenderness), and throwing it on

his shoulders, joined the witches in their headlong flight, keeping up with them in a manner which would have been marvellous, had not his love for the reptiles under whose form mankind was first tempted to sin, his wild glances, and, above all, the tail with which he was



Flight of the Witches.

adorned, shown pretty clearly that he was Someone whom no good people can think of without hoping he is very far from themselves. As the most formidable of their adversaries thus dashed off in headlong flight from the castle, a ringing cheer arose from the mannikins within, and a clear hoot of triumph proceeding from the

owl evinced his sympathy with the victory of his subjects and friends.

All, however, was not over yet. A certain quantity of snakes, who had either wriggled through holes in which the broken glass had been less plentifully strewn, or the superior toughness of whose skin had protected them better than that of their comrades, were still hissing frightfully in the outer courtyard, which was also occupied by a considerable number of rats, frogs, and toads. These evil creatures, being left without the guidance of the witches who had lured them to the place, were in considerable difficulty what to do, and their alarm and horror were great indeed when, loud sounding through the air, the same voice which had given orders for the lighting up of the castle pronounced the following words :—

“ Those who have sought to enter here,
Protected by the witches' charm,
May learn that nought can interfere
With power of Owl to work them harm.
Within this castle's sacred wall,
Though mighty may the witches seem,
Their magic has no might at all—
The Owl and Nature reign supreme.
So, creatures foul, who crouch below,
Your usual instincts quickly take;
Cats, recognise your rat-like foe;
Frogs, tremble at the fangs of snake ! ”

Even as the voice ceased the creatures to whom the above words were addressed seemed to feel their effects and to act at once upon the instructions given. Without any delay, the cats who had dropped down inside the castle walls on receiving the watery deluge with which the mannikins had greeted them, rushed with fury upon

the unhappy rats whom they saw before them, apparently forgetful of everything except those natural instincts which led them to destroy and eat animals whom they had ever been accustomed to regard as fit objects where-with to satisfy their hungry appetites. At the same instant it seemed to strike the snakes that a perfectly legitimate opportunity had arisen for feasting upon those frogs who were congregated in their immediate vicinity, and, acting at once upon the idea, they commenced to swallow the wretched creatures without any unnecessary delay.

The mannikins calmly looked down meanwhile, and watched their enemies destroying each other until there was scarcely a live rat or frog left in the place, and the toads had fled frantically into the wood for fear the snakes should mistake them for frogs and they should be subjected to a fate from which all their dabblings in magic art might not have been able to preserve them. When the cries of the devouring and devoured creatures below had pretty well ceased, and few save cats and snakes were any longer to be seen in the courtyard, the owl gave a signal at which the mannikins turned on the water which, unknown to any person save themselves and their master, had been laid on to supply the castle in case of fire, and which by a judicious arrangement of pipes could be made to flood the courtyard at pleasure. The gorged cats and snakes were unable to make any effort to escape, although the latter might probably have swum safely off, many of them being water-snakes, and entertaining no great objection to the element. But, alas for them ! there was one little circumstance which entirely prevented it. The

water was boiling, having been conducted through the kitchen of the castle, the large boilers of which had, by the owl's orders, been carefully heated for the occasion. The shrieks of the wretched animals were dreadful to hear, when they became aware of the trap in which they had been caught and the cruel fate which awaited them, from which escape was hopeless. They strove in vain to clamber up the walls or to creep through the holes; wherever they succeeded in raising themselves up from the water on to the walls, the mannikins with drawn swords and fierce looks relentlessly pushed them back into the hot bath below, so that, after a space of some twenty minutes or so, any person who desired a meal of boiled cat and snake-sauce might have been easily accommodated, and every one of the wretched creatures had perished.

Thus the castle was rid of the last of its invaders, and the mannikins had only to let the water off, which they did by means of a large sewer underneath the courtyard, the stone covering of which having been lifted by means of a spring worked from above, the bodies of the slain were washed below, and all traces of the battle and its victims were swept away from that part of the castle in an incredibly short space of time. Victory, entire and complete, now rested with the defenders of the castle, and their joy may be easily imagined. Not a mannikin had been slain or hurt, so effectually had they been protected by the power of the great owl, and the defeat and loss which had been inflicted upon their enemies had been of a character to prevent, or at all events greatly to lessen, the probability of any future attacks.

The little people passed the rest of the night in the most sensible and proper way possible ; that is to say, they put out the lights and went to bed, which is a thing which every reasonable creature should do at a proper hour, unless he happens to be desirous of weakening mind and body by depriving both of their natural rest, and thereby shortening the term of his existence.

The mannikins were astir early the next morning, putting everything to rights after the confusion of the night's adventures. The glass was carefully picked out of the holes in the wall, the courtyards were cleaned, the bodies of those of the enemy who had fallen outside were decently buried, and the whole place resumed its former peaceful appearance within a very few hours. Then the mannikins returned to their usual lives ; their swords were put away, their angry feelings forgotten, and their time spent in singing, dancing, and merriment as heretofore.

Meanwhile the three witches were in a frame of mind by no means enviable. Dame Stokes and Mother Wandle still smarted considerably from the effects of the severe whipping which they had each received ; and although Goody Tickleback had, by her superior cunning, escaped that disagreeable punishment, she suffered bitterly from mortified vanity and disappointment at having been so entirely defeated in the attack which she had planned against the castle of the mannikins. The three old women took counsel together as to whether there was anything more to be done against those whom they chose to consider their deadly enemies, or whether they had better give it up as a bad job. Evil, however, never sleeps or remains quiet if it can possibly help it,

and so strong was the spirit of evil's power over these wretched creatures that they felt themselves constrained to go on with their wicked work, and to plot and scheme something more against the innocent objects of their hatred. Their proceedings, however, had been rendered somewhat more difficult by the total failure which they had just experienced. They found the cats resolute in their refusal to embark in any further enterprises of a similar character to the last. The toads glared and spat dreadfully from fright when the subject was merely alluded to; and as to the rats, snakes, and frogs, they had suffered so heavily in the recent disaster that it was impossible to expect that anything short of absolute compulsion would induce a single one of them to take the field.

Under these circumstances the witches had recourse to the stoats and polecats, who were a fierce and blood-thirsty race, and might be of essential service if they could be persuaded to undertake the matter. Indeed, Goody Tickleback bit her lips with vexation at having forgotten to secure these powerful allies before, as she felt that they would have materially contributed to the strength of her former expedition, and consequently to its chance of success. Accordingly, having bribed them with large promises of tender young rabbits, and having paid a portion of the bribe in advance, which the cunning creatures insisted upon as a condition of their doing anything at all, the wicked old women succeeded in bringing a considerable army of stoats into the field, together with a small but compact band of polecats. The wily dames had sorely tempted the foxes and badgers of Windsor forest, but the former animals made

various excuses, and the latter, having consulted a famous old badger who lived at that time in the Brocas clump, declined altogether to have anything to do with the matter. So the three witches led forth their army, composed only of the animals I have mentioned, and arranged to cross the river upon a certain evening. The particular place upon which they had fixed to cross was at a considerable distance from any bridge, and some of these animals therefore had to swim, whilst those who could not or would not do so were provided with boats and rafts constructed by the magic powers of the old women. They themselves flew over in the usual manner, one as a bat, another on her famous broomstick, and the third on her awful steed. Then they stood on the opposite bank, awaiting their army, who, when they had finished all their preparations, sharpened their teeth and claws, and made other necessary arrangements, plunged into the river, and began to follow their leaders.

And now occurred one of the most singular scenes which it has ever been my good fortune to witness since I first presided over the destinies of this noble river. I have seen a great many strange things and people, Brother Rhine, and been a spectator of a great many curious sights. Moreover, during a long period of years, I have carefully inquired into and studied the natural habits and ways of living which distinguish the numerous animals, birds, and beasts which inhabit the banks and waters of my stream, in all of whom, indeed, I have ever taken that lively interest which becomes a person in my position. But I may as well frankly tell you at once that nothing ever astonished me more than the scene which followed the attempt of the stoats and polecats to

cross the river in order to attack the owl's castle. They got nearly half-way across without anybody offering to dispute their passage. Then, all of a sudden, a strange, wild sound was heard, and a song was borne down upon the breeze which I knew full well as the war-song of the noble swans who honour my river by making it their home, and who are well known as the finest and handsomest swans in all Christendom.

“ The swan swam up the stream ;
Swim, swan, swim !
The swan swam down again ;
Well swam, swan ! ”

This was the whole of the song ; the words are simple, and apparently convey no particular meaning, being little more than the statement of a fact which may without difficulty be accepted as true, coupled with an expression of approval of the manner in which the bird in question had performed a natural and not uncongenial task. But if you were to hear this song sung by a number of swans together, all keeping tune exactly, and sailing down upon you as they sung, with flashing eyes and arched necks, evidently actuated by no friendly feeling, it is very doubtful whether you would care much about either the words or their meaning, and not improbable that you would prefer to be somewhat farther off from the sounds of the entrancing melody. So at least it certainly was with the allies of the witches, when a body of at least fifty or sixty swans (being a larger number than I had ever previously seen together in any part of my river) suddenly appeared sailing down upon them at full speed. It was altogether a most extraordinary proceeding on the part of the noble birds, who,

although ready and most able to defend themselves if attacked, are generally of a quiet and peaceful nature, and had hitherto, as far as my knowledge went, interfered with none of the other dwellers in or near the river, but lived in friendship and harmony with all.

Their intentions, however, upon the present occasion were never for a moment doubtful after their first appearance. They charged down upon the army of stoats and polecats with a force and velocity which rendered resistance impossible. The boats and rafts were at once overset by the impetuous fury of their attack, and the occupants thereof were in another instant struggling in the waters. Nor did the swimmers fare any better, for the powerful blows inflicted by a swan's beak in every instance either stunned the animal struck, or so disabled him that he could swim no farther, but sank beneath the water to rise no more. The wretched creatures could do nothing to defend themselves, for the swans were too wary to approach their breasts near enough to any of the savage little animals to allow of their getting hold of their soft feathers. They kept far enough off for their own safety, after once upsetting the boats, and yet sufficiently near to deal out the pecks of death upon the struggling carcases with little or no risk to themselves. They utterly broke through and dispersed at once the line of the swimming and floating army, and then, turning round and coming up stream, slew multitudes of the wretched animals as they swam for their lives one way or another. A very few moments sufficed for the total rout of the witches' army, not one of which ever reached the shore to which they were bound, though a few managed to swim back in safety, and those who had

been only just about to enter the river naturally gave up any further idea of doing so, and fled in great confusion back to the shelter of the forest from which they had come. The swans, meanwhile, who had ceased singing their war-song as soon as they reached the enemy, and had commenced a violent and angry hissing, which they only suspended when they bowed their heads in order to peck an enemy to his death, now recommenced their musical strains so soon as they had completely routed and destroyed the invading army, and swam back up the river with heads elevated high in the air, shaking themselves now and then with an air of conscious strength and exultation.

During the progress of these events, Brother Rhine, the state of mind and general feelings of the three witches may be better imagined than described. They wept, they howled, they tore what hair they had, they used language with which I will not sully my lips, and manifested every token of frantic rage and consternation. Charms and incantations they would have tried, but they knew well enough that they had no power whatever over things or beings in my sacred waters. The swans only laughed at their wild fury and strange gesticulations, and the old women remained upon the bank, perfectly helpless. Once more their plans against the owl and his mannikins had utterly failed; and they saw the destruction of the army which they had taken so much pains to raise, without the smallest power to avert the catastrophe which again dashed their fondest hopes to the ground.

At the conclusion of the scene which had terminated so disagreeably to themselves, the witches, having

nearly exhausted themselves with their rage, calmed down a little, and began to look at each other and wonder what they should do next. This, however, was not a matter long left within their own choice; even as they stood, the heavens grew dark with a mysterious and unnatural darkness, low mutterings of distant thunder were heard, and the wind wailed mournfully as it swept across the river and through the trees of the adjoining wood in which stood the castle of the mannikins. A deep and distant terror seized upon the three witches as these things occurred; they felt, somehow or other, that those were near against whom their magic arts were powerless, and that some wonderful and awful Presence was at hand which they could neither withstand nor avoid. Trembling in every limb, they cowered upon the bank, shivering as if with cold, their teeth chattering, their eyes ready to start out of their heads with fright, and their hearts beating with that fear of coming judgment which wickedness always brings sooner or later to hearts that conceive and practise it. Some internal and inscrutable feeling seemed to warn them that their hour of punishment was near, and that retribution was at hand—retribution for all the pain and misery which they had caused to others ever since they first sold themselves to work evil instead of endeavouring to lead good and pious lives, and to be a comfort instead of a plague and torment to their fellow-creatures.

The suspense which they endured during this time was probably something more terribly painful than one can imagine, and the uncertainty of their coming doom made it all the more dreadful in anticipation. This state of things lasted for some little while, and a stillness,

solemn and awful in its intensity, reigned around. The wind fell again, and the sound of thunder ceased; only the old river went rolling on in its calm, ceaseless stream, the soothing ripple of which smote upon the ear of the unhappy witches as the solemn tones of a judge must fall upon the guilty criminal before him. Each moment seemed an hour to the terror-stricken old hags, and I imagine that no child who has waited in a dentist's room until that popular operator was ready for him has ever endured half the agony of expectation which was experienced at this time by the three witches.

At last the silence was broken, and that in a manner which it would have been impossible for them to have anticipated. The low roll of a drum was heard in the wood, which sound swelled gradually upon the ear, and was then mingled with other martial music, evidently betokening the approach of an army. In a few moments more there issued from the direction of the owl's castle a strange and unwonted procession. First of all came a splendid array of cock pheasants, gay with their bright and gaudy colours, and carrying their well-known banner of dark blue, in the centre of which is depicted a magnificent bird of their species looking round with a defiant air, whilst underneath him is inscribed the celebrated motto of his race—"Game to the last." The pheasants were followed by a strong detachment of partridges, each with his brown horseshoe strongly developed upon his breast, whilst a golden wheat-sheaf upon a banner of russet brown, and the motto, "Hurrah for the harvest-fields!" showed the character of the regiment. They were followed by a body of woodcocks and snipes,

marching in alternate ranks, and displaying their respective banners, being a bird of each race worked in blue upon a white ground, and represented as tossing his long beak high in the air and saying, in the inscription below, "Settle my bill if you can!" To these succeeded a gallant regiment of bantams, whose arrogant motto, "Cock of the walk," was displayed upon their crimson flags; whilst the "Come back! come back!" of the Guinea-fowl was seen upon the banners of the next comers. Other bands of birds followed, each with its own peculiar standard and device, and all marched in slow and solemn order from the wood to the music already mentioned, which was played by an invisible band within the leafy shade of the same.

As each regiment emerged from the wood, it advanced within a stone's throw of the three witches, and took up ground at that distance, so that the old women found a semicircle gradually forming around them, which extended on all sides save that on which the river flowed. When numerous companies of birds had arrived and taken their places, there next appeared a strong detachment of squirrels—animals to which it is well known that witches entertain a peculiar dislike, on account of the restless activity of their nature, and their constant habit of dropping nutshells suddenly on the heads of persons engaged in unholy incantations and rites in the forests wherein they happen to dwell. The old women shuddered afresh then, when these creatures appeared upon the scene, especially as they came on, each armed with a bag of nuts, and with eyes full of mischief. They were followed by a quantity of rabbits, whose grave and martial appearance would have led you to suppose that

there were no such things as weasels or ferrets in the world; and after the rabbits came the principal part of the performance.

More than one hundred mannikins, fully armed and equipped, rode out of the wood, each mounted upon a prancing hare. Their saddles were made of mouse-skin, their bridles were of the best red tape, and their tortoise-shell bits rattled in the mouths of their fiery steeds. Each mannikin had upon his head a burnished helmet of mother-of-pearl, in which was a plume from the wing of a kingfisher, and the armour of each was of the best wrought tin, and sparkled gaily in the sunlight, which now again spread over the heavens as the troops emerged from the trees. The mannikins rode forward in loose order, whilst immediately after them came a close carriage, drawn by twelve cream-coloured hares, and surrounded by twenty mannikins on either side, and a number of owls of every species and description following behind. The mannikins who had ridden in front gave way when they approached the witches, falling back on either side so as to allow the carriage to pass between their ranks. It drew up immediately before the three trembling hags, and the attendant mannikins, bowing low and uncovering their heads, opened the doors for its occupant to descend.

You can have little doubt, Brother Rhine, as to who that occupant was, nor, indeed, was doubt long permitted to the personages most immediately interested in the drama about to be performed. From forth the carriage stepped a figure which all at the same moment recognised as that of the black owl of the castle. Not long, however, did he remain in the shape in which his

audience were most accustomed to behold him. Throwing back the head-dress and feathery cloak which begirt him, the figure of a noble youth stood before the astonished witches. His head was thrown back in contemptuous scorn, his eyes flashed with the indignation which virtue always experiences in the presence of vice; he stretched forth his hand, in which was grasped an ash stick, carefully peeled, so that it shone fresh and white, and this he waved gently in the air as he spoke in clear and sounding accents—"Vile hags!" he exclaimed; and as he uttered the words, Dame Stokes, Mother Wandle, and Goody Tickleback fell on their knees, whining and moaning in piteous tones—"Vile hags! once more have ye presumed to tempt your fate by plotting and scheming the destruction of my mannikins. The warning which ye had previously received seems to have produced no effect whatever upon ye, and ye will now have to endure the punishment ye have so well earned!"

As he spoke the old women grovelled on the earth at his feet, and mumbled forth in low and beseeching accents, "Oh, sir! *please* let us off this time; just this once; it is the first time—we'll never, never, do it again. *Please 'give us first fault'!*"

This expression, always well known among witches, and intended to express the forgiveness of an offence because of its being on that occasion committed for the first time, appeared greatly to increase the anger of the person addressed.

"First fault!" he exclaimed, indignantly, "why, how dare you utter such a falsehood? You have been complained of a dozen times at least by my mannikins, and

I have only spared you hitherto from a hope that you might reform, and give up your evil practices. You have not only made yourselves the pest of the whole place for a long time past, but you have now for the second time projected an attack upon the castle which I specially protect. First fault indeed! Two of you were well flogged the other day, and there is now nothing for it but to send you away altogether."

At these words the wretched creatures burst into a howl of anguish, upon which the young man waved his hand, and a burst of sound arose from the invisible band, in which the tones of the bagpipe were distinctly audible, and which completely drowned the cries of the miserable witches. As soon as the latter and the music had ceased together, the young man continued to speak in a voice as stern as clear—

"I have hesitated," he said, "as to the precise punishment which I should inflict upon each of you, for indeed I hardly know of any which is sufficiently severe for the crimes which you have committed. I had thought, indeed, of transforming you into shapes different from your own, but still possessing human form, and causing you to experience in them the greatest trouble and misery to which human life is subject. I have still a great mind to do so. I am very much disposed to make one of you a leader in the world of fashion, the second a Member of Parliament, and the third the Head Master of a Public School, which is under the control of a Governing Body."

At this point such a dreadful shriek broke simultaneously from the three witches, that the squirrels were obliged to be called in and ordered to pelt them with

nuts, until they again crouched trembling but silent on the ground before their judge.

“But,” continued he, without noticing the interruption, “it shall never be said of me that I was guilty of unnecessary cruelty. There *are*, I must own, punishments too severe even for crimes such as yours, and among such these might possibly be included. As I am a great and powerful, so am I a merciful fairy, and I shall not award you one iota of suffering more than is your due. Dame Stokes of Datchet, though bad enough, you are in some respects the best of the three. You have at least, as a rule, preserved your natural form; and could you but have persuaded yourself to give up that abominable, not to say ridiculous, habit of riding on a broomstick, you might have passed through life with all the ordinary comforts of an English peasant, and ended your days in respectability and the parish workhouse. Since, however, you have persisted in using as a horse that which was intended as a harmless and useful domestic implement, you must pay the penalty of your indiscretion. You will be changed into a donkey, and as such may remain in your native place.

Dame Stokes was just commencing a loud howl at the news of her impending fate, when a gaily attired young mannikin stepped before the fairy, and, making a low obeisance, craved leave to speak, which was at once graciously accorded.

“Noble master,” said he, “if a poor mannikin may put in a word, is this sentence one which requires any transformation at all? A person who, being able to ride on anything else, chooses a broomstick, must already be

such a donkey as to render a further change in the same direction quite unnecessary."

The great fairy smiled.

"Your words are true, my child," he replied, "in one sense, but they only tend to confirm the wisdom of my sentence. A donkey in thought and action is not always a donkey in shape. Were it otherwise, the world would be much more largely populated by those worthy and industrious animals. It is no terrible fate to which I condemn the aged Stokes. She will forthwith enter upon an existence in which she may render no inconsiderable service to mortals, who, whilst they despise, will not scruple to use her; and should she, as is highly probable, at any period of time, become the property of an itinerant vendor of brooms, she will have every chance of acquiring a further knowledge of the purposes to which a broomstick may be properly applied."

He spoke, and as he concluded, a change at once came over the figure and appearance of Dame Stokes. Great ears sprung up on each side of her head, which became at once altered and elongated into that of a donkey; her body followed the example; a huge tail appeared in the usual place allotted to such appendages, and in another moment she stood, a veritable ass, before the assembled throng.

Then the young man turned to the terrified Mother Wandle, and sternly addressed her in her turn.

"You," he said, "though not so bad as the third, are worse than the first of your party. Not content with your own shape (which I will, however, own was not prepossessing), you have gone about the country in disguise, and have, moreover, disgraced the family of bats (many

of whom are honest and owl-fearing creatures) by assuming the shape of one of them, and in this form perpetrating your wicked deeds. Now one of two things must be true. Either you were *not* by rights a bat, and had therefore no right to the shape of one, or, being a bat, you had no business to disgrace the family. In either case you are equally guilty, and your punishment must be proportionately severe. Since you have evinced, by the most practical means within your power, the undoubted preference which you cherish for the form of a bat, a bat you shall remain for ever, and, once for all, quit that human shape which you have so foolishly despised: Henceforth be your life that of the animal whom you have loved to imitate in your midnight flittings. Behind shutters, under eaves, beneath old boards and barn-sides be hidden, wretch, from the face of the sun, and only come forth when the shades of evening steal over the face of the earth. Shun the gaze of mankind, whom you have only lived to annoy, and rank for the rest of your existence amongst the most lowly and feeble of animals."

He spoke, and, as in the case of Dame Stokes, the form and figure of Mother Wandle changed even as he ceased speaking, and a huge and unsightly bat occupied the place of the old woman, whilst a murmur of applause and approval was uttered by all who witnessed the transformation.

Then the owl-fairy turned upon the wretched Goody Tickleback, who stood in gloomy silence awaiting the doom which she full well knew her crimes had deserved, but which was not likely to be one whit more palatable on that account.

“Vile and degraded creature,” exclaimed the fairy, regarding the object of his address with a stern and angry countenance, “you have at last been brought to account for your numerous crimes, which exceed those of your companions in guilt, and have rightly made you detested by every one to whom you are known. You have gone on for a long time in your nefarious course, unchecked by any consideration for those innocent beings against whom your evil practices have been directed, and undeterred either by the pangs of that remorse, which must at times have overshadowed even such a hardened soul as yours, or by the fear of that punishment which, though long deferred, was certain to arrive at last. In your life you have exhibited the ferocity of a tiger, the cruelty of an hyæna, and the craft of a serpent. A serpent therefore you shall be for the future, and as you have, like the rest of your fraternity, always entertained a great horror of water, you shall be consigned for ever to that element, and become a sea-serpent for the rest of your existence.”

A wild yell broke from Goody Tickleback as these words left the lips of the royal fairy, and she burst forth into a desperate cry for a mitigation of so terrible a sentence.

“Oh no! oh no!” she shrieked aloud in the madness of her despair; “not that, not that, for mercy’s sake! anything but that! Make me a stone, or a stick, or a good birch-rod if you will, great fairy. I promise I will act up to my name, and tickle with good-will every back that comes under me, if you will only make me this instead of a horrible snake. Oh do! oh do! oh don’t——”

And she ended her speech with a yell more awful than before as she felt the dreadful transformation which had been awarded begin slowly but surely to steal over her decrepit frame.

The fairy smiled coldly.

“Cruel to the last,” he observed. “The vile hag would be made an instrument of torture in an inanimate shape, since she may no longer torment people in her original form. But it may not be. The doom has been pronounced, and already begins to take effect.”

Even as he spoke, the form of the old woman gradually changed into that of an enormous sea-serpent, and her yells culminated in a fearful hissing, from which the legions of valiant birds instinctively recoiled. A scaly monster of the deep occupied the place—and rather more than the place—lately filled by old Goody Tickle-back, and the last of the three witches had now received her allotted punishment. The owl-fairy then struck the ground sharply three times with his ashen stick, and each of the three culprits departed different ways. The donkey stretched out its tail, erected its ears, elevated its head, and gave vent to sundry of those loud and discordant noises by which creatures of that particular species are distinguished from other four-footed beasts. Then, looking around once more, it slowly set off at a trot, which presently became a galop; and, passing through the ranks of the bird and mannikin army, which divided for its passage, took the direction of Datchet, and hastened thither as fast as it could lay legs to the ground.

I will not follow the adventures of the poor beast any longer, though I may as well tell you, Brother Rhine,

that I know for a fact she lingered in the same neighbourhood for a very long time. Indeed, not many weeks since, whilst walking upon Dorney Common, I heard cries as of an animal in distress, and, looking round, beheld a seller of brooms vehemently belabouring a half-starved ass with a broomstick. The poor beast was in sad condition. It was laden with a heavy load of brooms, and its speaking eyes seemed to tell of much privation and suffering. I seemed somehow or other to remember the expression of the face, and in a few moments recalled the circumstances of which I have just been telling you. There indeed was old Dame Stokes, serving out her time in long apprenticeship to misery and punishment, and experiencing that practical application of the broomstick which the owl-fairy had foretold. I passed on my way to the river, and sighed as I thought over her fate, pondering meanwhile upon the melancholy fact that sin should be so attractive as it had proved to this old woman, when its punishment, sooner or later, is so certain and is of so much more enduring a character than the questionable pleasure which has earned it.

As to Mother Wandle, there is but little to tell of her. As soon as she was permitted to do so, she flitted away across my river in the direction of Windsor Forest, and, for anything I know, may be there still. Bats are not creatures that one ever hears much of, nor have I been accustomed to interest myself particularly in their proceedings; but if you happen to see an especially ugly and repulsive bat, it is quite as likely to be old Mother Wandle as anybody else, and you may be sure that she is still enduring the punishment so justly inflicted upon her by a righteous judge.

Goody Tickleback's exit from the scene was of a more marked and singular character. It would have been difficult to have disposed of so gigantic a monster by any ordinary process. It could not have travelled by land to the ocean, except on wheels; and although it might have been possible to have paid expenses by sending it thither in the caravan of a travelling showman—supposing a vehicle of that description, and of sufficiently large size, to have been in being—such a course would have been scarcely consistent with the usage of fairyland, or with the nature and circumstances of the case. It might, of course, have been possible to have floated the creature down the waters of my river, but against such a proceeding my nymphs, elves, and swans would have protested indignantly, even had I been disposed for a moment to sanction it. Besides this, the inconvenience to traffic, and the bad odour which so foul a reptile would leave in the water, not to mention its possible indulgence in some mischievous and destructive habits which would have brought the river into bad repute, were all difficulties in the way. I could not allow a "Thames nuisance" to be thus originated which would have been probably fraught with most unpleasant consequences, and could have done no possible good to anybody. This, therefore, being out of the question, it only remained for the owl-fairy to exercise his magic power somewhat further, and get rid of the vast and cumbrous body which he had seen fit to create. The wonderful being made not the slightest difficulty. Waving his rod three times above his head, and describing with it a circle in the air, he struck upon the ground, which immediately opened wide beneath the

hideous serpent, and exhibited an enormous chasm, down which it slowly disappeared, and was seen no more in those regions of the earth.

Marvellous legends, however, have been told of the great Sea-serpent since that day, and those who know the circumstances which I have related are able to judge of their truth better than the ignorant and unlearned.



The Sea-serpent.

At times, when, far out at sea, the waves are running mountains high, the ship can scarce weather the storm, and some of the affrighted sailors have betaken themselves to their boats in hopes to preserve their lives, a hideous monster is said to rise from the deep, encircling and crushing the boat with its gigantic coil, and striking with its cruel fangs the drowning mariners. At other times, when all is calm, and the surface of the ocean ripples softly, like a lake stirred by the zephyrs' softest

breath, a huge and awful form may be seen floating on the waves, slowly making its way through the waters, and ever and anon raising its hideous serpent-head aloft, as if in search of something to injure or destroy. Wonderful tales do the sailor men bring home of this extraordinary creature, and wise folk oftentimes shake their heads and affect to disbelieve in its existence. But we, Brother Rhine, who know this chronicle of early days which I have just been telling, shake no heads over the matter, and entertain no doubt of the reality of the sight which the sons of Neptune aver that they have seen. Old Goody Tickleback is the great Sea-serpent, and my only wonder is that, when the great owl-fairy was about it, he did not put her out of the way altogether, instead of leaving her in a position in which she could still work so much mischief to mortal men. I suppose, however, that fairies, like other people, know their own business best; and there was probably some reason against this self-evidently wise course which does not occur to those who do not happen themselves to be fairies.

In this manner, anyhow, the three witches were comfortably disposed of, and, to my mind, there never was a clearer case of "a good riddance of bad rubbish." Having accomplished his task, the owl-fairy now re-entered his carriage, and directed the troops to pass before him, which they accordingly did, each company saluting as it passed. The review being finished, the whole procession returned to the wood in the same order as that in which they had emerged from it, and in a very short time the banks of the river were as quiet as if nothing unusual had happened. The mannikins were

never afterwards molested by witches or any such nefarious customers, and, as long as they chose to inhabit the castle, they were perfectly free from disturbance or attack. Time at last did its work upon the old walls, and when the hum of the steam-engine began to be heard in the land this was no longer a place for mannikins. They flitted I know not where, and the owl-fairy doubtless went with them. I could perhaps tell you more, but melancholy thoughts come over me as I speak of the departure of old friends and neighbours, and I think, with your good leave, I will here bring my legend to a conclusion.

“Thanks, good brother,” said the Monarch of the Rhine, as Father Thames ceased speaking. “Yet would I fain inquire who or what was this great owl-fairy?”

His companion smiled grimly. “Hast thou so soon forgotten thine own objection to questions concerning our legends when finished?” he asked. “Nevertheless I would tell thee if I could, but I fear to speak with certainty upon a subject which has ever been shrouded in doubt. Most authorities agree that this mighty being could be none other than he of whom mention was made in my first legend—that of the Wild Boar of Windsor Forest. But the great fairy, Toddlekins, did not announce himself on the occasion of the transformation of the three witches; and the only proof that it was he who reigned over the mannikins and delivered them from their enemies consists in the similarity of his appearance with that of the rescuer of Smith in the Druid days. I incline to think it may have been him; and we know that wherever Toddlekins has power good

prevails and evil flies from his presence; but more I cannot tell you."

"Be it so, brother," returned he of the Rhine; "the matter, anyhow, ended well, and I would that my Rhine-land had a fairy Toddlekins as well as thy favoured country."

Father Thames smiled grimly. "There never could be two such as Toddlekins in this world," replied he; "and it is a blessing for me and mine that there has been one. But come, Brother Rhine, there is yet time for another legend. Hast thou none of the old war times, and of the brave German barons who fought so oft and so fiercely?"

"Ay, that have I, many an one," responded the other. "I bethink me, moreover, of one which is not strictly or wholly of mine own land, nor in truth do I know precisely to what land it can be said entirely to belong. It is one, however, which has been handed down to us in verse, if you object not to a tale told in such fashion."

"Object, indeed!" cried jolly old Father Thames in a pleasant voice. "How or why should I object? Are not some of our very best English legends told in verse? Witness that excellent old story of—

' Old King Cole was a merry old soul,
And so was old King Tudor;
But merrier still was Miss Mary Cole,
When the Earl of Pembroke woo'd her.'

That *is* a fine legend, if you please! I heard it all told by a descendant of the Cole family, who stumbled on the story in an old manuscript, and instantly went out to Cannes, in the South of France, where he studied it

carefully with a view to producing it for the benefit of the English public, and was only prevented from doing so by his sisters, who insisted upon it that the wooing done in their family, even at a remote period, was a matter of private history which should never be allowed to become public property. Perhaps they had some affair of the same kind in hand themselves, and did not want to establish an inconvenient precedent."

"Very likely," remarked the Rhine King somewhat sulkily; "but if you go on like this I shall never get away. Pray give a fellow a chance, and don't keep all the talk to yourself—you and your Coles."

"Hold hard!" cried Father Thames at this. "I am not going to be 'called over the coals' by any foreigner."

"A truce to your puns!" said he of the Rhine; and as Father Thames said no more, he at once began the song of

Sir Roderick Fowle.

A LEGEND OF THE OLDEN TIME.

I.

Sir Roderick Fowle has returned from the East,
Where believers are fighting the Paynim;
Though they slaughtered his squire, and they wounded his beast,
No Saracen foeman has slain him.

II.

He has crossed the salt seas, and has come to the land
Where no man of battle afraid is,
But all have, in war, a keen blade and strong hand,
And, in peace, a true heart for the ladies.

III.

To the land of the Gaul is Sir Roderick come
 (Concluded his Saracen fighting),
 And with joy and delight is struck perfectly dumb,
 On the shores of his country alighting—

IV.

The land where he'd lived as an innocent child
 (And now he 's a vigorous man, see !),
 Where Ida, the lovely, had first on him smiled
 And captured his heart and his fancy.

V.

Sweet Ida, the daughter of Montmolon's lord
 (How blest to possess such a daughter !),
 Was fairest of fair demoiselles—in a word,
 All the marrying bachelors sought her.

VI.

But "attentions" she cared for but little, said she,
 And, really, seemed scarcely to heed 'em ;
 And for marrying ! oh ! 'twas like "felo de se,"
 If you *could* keep your spinsterly freedom.

VII.

So she turned up her aquiline nose at them all,
 And refused a round dozen of offers
 From lords and from knights, who would constantly fall
 At her feet with their hearts and their coffers.

VIII.

Till fate in her way threw Sir Roderick Fowle,
 Before he departed this war on,
 Then love made the damsel as blind as an owl,
 And she promised herself to the Baron.

IX.

The war was declared—there was no time to woo,
 When legions and armies were forming,
 But, handsome and bold, he knew well what to do,
 So he carried the fortress by storming.

X.

And she promised to wed, if he shouldn't be dead,
 When the Christians had settled the Paynim.
 He must go there, he said ; but she wanted, instead,
 By her apron-string still to detain him.

XI.

But he'd promised to go, and he would, and he must
 (These men are such obstinate cattle !),
 So his heart to her keeping the lover did trust,
 And set off, like a man, to the battle.

XII.

He went, and he came, and sustained his great name,
 For when was a Fowle e'er behindhand ?
 And returned to receive the sweet laurels of fame
 From his Ida's most willing and kind hand.

XIII.

When a man's seeking *laurels*, to keep him at *bay*
 Is a deed most exceedingly cruel,
 So we'll hasten our baron along on his way
 To the casket which held his bright jewel.

XIV.

Lofty and high were the Montmolon towers,
 And fortified, too, beyond measure,
 Lest any bold lord of the neighbouring powers
 Should harry the Montmolon treasure.

xv.

Sir Roderick gazed on the gloomy old wall,
 Which the ivy was slowly corroding,
 When a sight met his eyes which his heart did appal,
 And fill with a fearful foreboding.

xvi.

Where the Montmolon banner of old used to wave,
 And merrily flaunt in the breezes,
 No banner hung now—all was still as the grave,
 Or the form that death's quietude seizes.

xvii.

The place looked so bleak—'tis a sad thing to speak,
 But sad things sometimes must be spoken ;
 And the winds they did shriek through that castle antique,
 For there wasn't a window unbroken !

xviii.

The mark of a foe did Sir Roderick know
 Full well—far too well to mistake it ;
 And he groaned deep and low, in sad accents of woe,
 Ere he turned round his horse to forsake it.

xix.

But he stopped ; for a groan quite as sad as his own
 Seemed to come from the shrubberies near him,
 And an old man he spied, sitting there all alone,
 Who appeared in no manner to fear him.

xx.

He approached, and affright half gave way to delight
 At the chance his lost bride to regain her,
 When he recognised quite, in this dolorous wight,
 A Montmolon former retainer.

XXI.

“ Old man ! ” he cried out, “ what’s this fuss all about ?
And has there been any disaster ?
You seemed crippled, no doubt : is’t rheumatics or gout ?
And where are your mistress and master ? ”

XXII.

With a guttural sigh, like one going to die,
The man raised him up on his knees, and
Thus made him reply, though the news, by-the-bye,
He scarce could get out of his weasand.

XXIII.

“ I’ve a sad tale to crack. Noble sir, you’ve come back
To a house sacked from basement to attics ;
Too long do I lack kitchen chimney and jack
For gout—let alone the rheumatics ! ”

XXIV.

“ I speak but with pain, for I’m slaughtered and slain
(Just look at my garments all gory),
But my breath I would fain a while longer retain
Till I’ve told you our terrible story.

XXV.

“ Fair Ida, I fear, you will scarcely find here,
Though the room which was hers still you *may* see,
For ‘tis nearly a year since with bow and with spear
Hither hastened Sir Marmaduke Tracy.

XXVI.

“ With soldiers in scores, ammunition, and stores,
He attacked our unfortunate village ;
He battered our doors (‘twas the greatest of bores),
And allowed all his people to pillage.

XXVII.

“ When the storm 'gan to lower, folks fled to the tower,
 Young and old the same thing very soon did ;
 We did all in our power, and young Ida's own bower
 Was turned into a ward for the wounded.

XXVIII.

“ For months four or five we continued to strive ;
 None ventured on shirking or shamming,
 Till one-half of our hive were no longer alive—
 Consumed between firing and famine.

XXIX.

“ When our lord 'gainst the rout could no longer hold out,
 He gave in, like a sensible covey ;
 No food was about, save one bottle of stout,
 Half a loaf, and a pot of anchovy.

XXX.

“ Then at length did we let (though with wondrous regret)
 Sir Marmaduke through the portcullis ;
 And the treatment we met no one there will forget,
 Unless he a regular gull is.

XXXI.

“ The Tracy began, and took ev'ry tenth man
 Of the Baron of Montmolon's people,
 Saying, ‘ Fly, if ye can, for ye soon will be dan-
 Gling from top of the neighbouring steeple.

XXXII.

“ Since ye foolishly list, Tracy's arms to resist,
 Ye shall see how his mercy shall treat ye ;
 And your wives shall be kissed, if by them ye are missed
 In your homes, while the carrion eat ye.'

XXXIII.

“ His men had the knack ; not a rope was too slack,
 Not a victim could loosen or slip cord.
 Our baron looked black ; but his arms 'hind his back
 Were fastened together with whipcord.

XXXIV.

“ He hanged these poor chaps, but I fancy that, perhaps,
 The other men's lot was the sorest ;
 Without clothes, shoes, or caps, but with plenty of slaps,
 He turned them adrift in the forest.

XXXV.

“ Some starved, sank, and died ; some few went beside
 Themselves with cold, hunger, and sorrow.
 'Twas little you spied of the Montmolon pride,
 When you looked at this place on the morrow.

XXXVI.

“ That truculent Goth, Sir Tracy, took both
 Our lord and his beautiful daughter.
 'To wed me,' he quoth, 'though the damsel be loth,
 To reason I soon shall have brought her.'

XXXVII.

“ I, escaping from hurt, more by chance than desert
 (My brother on Tracy's estate is),
 Have lived, I assert, sitting here in the dirt,
 Upon nothing but berries and praties.

XXXVIII.

“ I was wounded, indeed ; don't you see how I bleed ?
 And I've had ne'er a surgeon, which *is* hard ;
 But my master's sad need, and the loss of his breed,
 'Tis *that*, sir, which sticks in my gizzard.

XXXIX.

“ My strength 'gins to fail : want of beef and of ale
 (How well I remember the brewin' !),
 My frame doth assail ; but I've told you the tale,
 And your eyes may behold the sad ruin.”

XL.

He stopped : faint and sore, he could utter no more,
 But sank on the ground, softly sighing ;
 His troubles were o'er : he was turned of four-score,
 And was dead ere he knew he was dying.

XLI.

Sir Roderick stood at the tidings aghast :
 Sad change from glad anticipation ;
 But he spoke out at last ; not too loud or too fast,
 But in accents of deep indignation.

XLII.

“ By all that is holy, by all that is blue,
 By the eyes of adorable Ida,
 Sir Marmaduke Tracy shall bitterly rue
 The moment when first he espied her !

XLIII.

“ I vow and declare, and I solemnly swear,
 That, fearless of dagger or bullet,
 I'll rout out that bear from his murderous lair,
 And slit his detestable gullet.

XLIV.

“ My life to the project henceforth I devote ;
 All else to this *one* shall knock under,
 Till I fasten my hand on his treacherous throat
 And tear the vile spoiler asunder !

XLV.

“When next here I tread, it shall be to be wed ;
But I mustn’t stay now any longer ;
This old fellow’s dead—there’s no more to be said,
He has perished of wounds and of hunger.”

XLVI.

Then he turned his horse round (who sprang off with a bound,
Accustomed in battle to dash on),
And with clattering sound, galloped over the ground
In a most irrepressible passion.

XLVII.

Two months had elapsed since that terrible day
When the Montmolon castle was taken,
And the baron and Ida were carried away
With small prospect of “saving their bacon.”

XLVIII.

The Tracy had taken them off to the rock
On which his own castle was builded ;
Which, he boasted, was safe from an enemy’s shock,
Whatever his valour or skill did.

XLIX.

Glenlighton its name ; ’twas a beautiful place,
As you saw when you came nigh and nigher it ;
But delectable Ida averted her face,
Too wrapt in her grief to admire it.

L.

Arrived, they were placed in a large suite of rooms,
Locked up, and a strong guard set by ’em,
And for weeks they saw none but retainers and grooms,
Who were ordered with food to supply ’em.

LI.

For Sir Marmaduke Tracy had reason to ride
 To some lord's in the neighbouring valley :
 Ere he thought of a bride, he the spoils must divide
 With the friends who'd connived at his sally.

LII.

But returning (too soon !) one fine morning in June,
 When brightly and warmly the sun shone,
 He came whistling a tune all along the saloon,
 And joined the small party at luncheon.

LIII.

“Now, Baron,” quoth he, “prithee hearken to me :
 To escape you may shortly the way see :
 If you e'er would be free, you must quickly agree,
 That your daughter becomes Lady Tracy.

LIV.

“I am elderly, true ; it were better for you
 That death hadn't taken my son John.
 But refuse ! if you do, why, the day you shall rue
 In a most insalubrious dungeon.”

LV.

Says the Baron, “I burn your assault to return,
 And, spite of your luncheons and *he* cook,
 My child will soon learn your proposals to spurn,
 You lubberly son of a sea-cook !

LVI.

“The battle you've won, vile son of a gun,
 Though more by your cunning than merit ;
 But, much though you've done, I can tell you that none
 Can break the true Montmolon spirit.

LVII.

“Sir Guy de la Vaux, I assuredly know,
 Will avenge the foul trick that you’ve played me ;
 And the Lord Montereaux to my rescue will go,
 Though houseless and homeless you’ve made me.

LVIII.

“No daughter of mine to a man will incline’
 Who has murdered her father’s retainers.
 Those are *my* views in fine ; my brave girl, I opine,
 Will in language more pretty explain hers ! ”

LIX.

Then Ida, “Papa, all your sentiments are
 My own—you are always so ready.
 And besides, much I fear, that though mighty in war,
 Sir Marmaduke’s rather unsteady.

LX.

“And I’m bound to declare, though hardly I dare
 (And my courage is quite down at zero),
 For *another* I care, and it wouldn’t be fair
 To give up my faithful young hero.

LXI.

“I met him, you know, nearly five years ago,
 Abroad, at the Henley regatta,
 So I’m bound to reply to Sir Marmaduke ‘No,’
 Although his attentions may flatter.”

LXII.

The Tracy laughed loud at the maiden so proud,
 But, says he, “Come, a truce to your chaffing ;
 It must be allowed that you don’t seem much cowed,
 But you’ll find it no matter for laughing.

LXIII.

“ You, madam, when cool, your affections must school
 To follow Sir Marmaduke’s pleasure ;
 And, Baron, you fool and cantankerous mule,
 In a dungeon shall ponder at leisure.

LXIV.

“ Nor think you secure that your friends will be truer
 Than others have been in like cases ;
 Sir Guy is too poor, and I’m perfectly sure
 ’Twill be long ere the Tracy he faces.

LXV.

“ And the Lord Montereaux died lately, I know
 (He always was rather dyspeptic) ;
 ’Tis a good week ago since they popped him below,
 Carried off by a fit epileptic.

LXVI.

“ ’Tis never my bent, you must know, to relent,
 And trouble you’re surely enough in,
 So your aid must be lent to make Ida consent,
 Unless you’re a regular muffin.

LXVII.

“ Meantime, to a dungeon I’ll order you off,
 Where the damp very constant and dense is ;
 And when crippled entirely with fever and cough,
 You’ll probably come to your senses.”

LXVIII.

He spoke, and withdrew, and the baron they threw
 Into dungeon both damp and unpleasant ;
 And left him to ponder, as well he might do,
 On the change from the past to the present.

LXIX.

Still, with wonderful pluck, to his orders he stuck
That his child shouldn't marry the tyrant ;
And Ida, sweet duck, though quite "down on her luck,"
Still frowned on the daring aspirant.

LXX.

Then Sir Tracy, irate, said she tempted her fate,
Declining so firmly to choose him ;
For he ne'er could abate in his love for a mate,
Who he knew would be sorry to lose him.

LXXI.

Ten days he'd allow her, he swore, when much vexed,
And partially drunk on his own ale ;
But each day she refused to be his, on the next
Should be wrenched from her father a toe-nail !

LXXII.

Now the baron was gouty and tender of feet,
A man, too, of delicate nurture,
And to injure him thus would be making complete
The system of underground torture.

LXXIII.

So Ida she stood on the turreted wall
On that very identical even,
And loudly for aid and assistance did call
On Roderick Fowle and on Heaven.

LXXIV.

What is it she sees through the leaves of the trees ?
By Jove ! 'tis a warrior's banner,
And men, thick as bees, drawing nigh by degrees
In a most unmistakable manner.

LXXV.

She views them approaching the castle so dread,
 And prays they may soon overwhelm it ;
 For she sees they are led by a chief at their head
 With a Hen, painted large, on his helmet.

LXXVI.

At this gladdening sight, she exclaimed in delight,
 " My Fowle is at hand to assist me !
 I'm positive quite I shall soon be all right,
 And again those dear lips will have kissed me ! "

LXXVII.

Sir Roderick true, as he came full in view
 And espied his adorable lady,
 Like a cock loudly crew, " I am coming to you ! "
 And a spring towards the battlements made he.

LXXVIII.

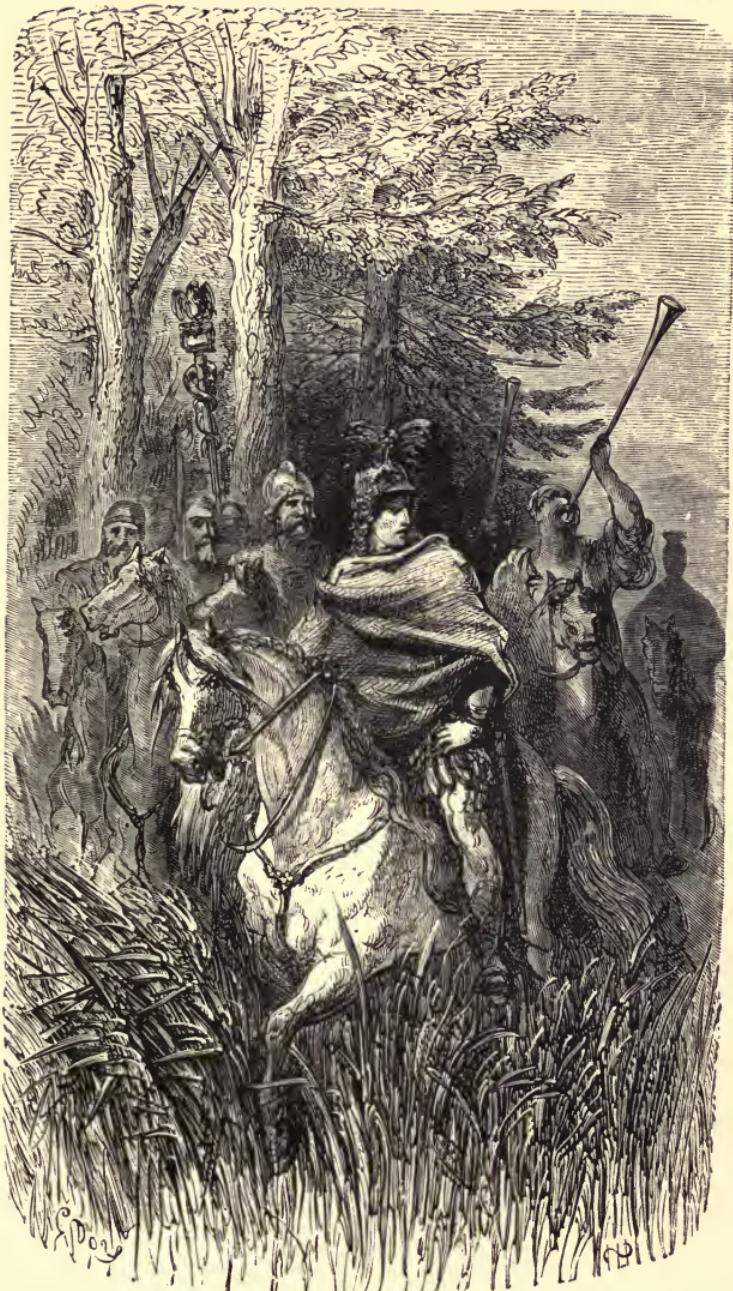
He 'd got a siege-train (as I here should explain),
 And a terrible ram for to batter,
 Which with might and with main, plied again and again,
 The walls of the fortress should shatter.

LXXIX.

Then he shouted his war-cry,—well known in the East,—
 " Cock-a-doodle ! " and brandished his pennon,
 Rushed on to the castle, not fearing the least,
 But urging his valorous men on.

LXXX.

The cruel Sir Marmaduke Tracy, meanwhile,
 Had been taking a quiet siesta,
 For he 'd promised poor Ida, with sinister smile,
 That day, that he wouldn't molest her.



FOWLE'S ADVANCE ON THE CASTLE.

Page 242.

LXXXI.

But, hearing the shock, at the foot of the rock,
 He came up by the maiden upon it,
 Of his foeman took stock, and exclaimed, "My young cock,
 'Tis a daring attempt, had you won it!"

LXXXII.

Fowle, clambering high, could invent no reply ;
 Says Tracy, " Though parleying *you* shun,
 Your end is so nigh, let me hope that to die
 You prepared ere you planned this intrusion."

LXXXIII.

Then a vast mass of brickwork he moved on a ledge
 Just above the unfortunate lover,
 And with all his great strength pushed it just to the edge
 Of the turret, then toppled it over.

LXXXIV.

With a rush and a roar, it went tumbling o'er,
 With but little less rumble than thunder ;
 Fowle's chance, small before, what event can restore
 If that terrible mass he lies under ?

LXXXV.

Then Sir Marmaduke bowed to the maiden quite cowed
 While her flesh with sheer terror was creeping,
 And said, " Madam so proud, it must now be allowed,
 There's no catching the Tracy a-sleeping."

LXXXVI.

" Come near, without dread," he tauntingly said,
 " On this ledge I will make by my side room ;
 See, your lover is dead ! so we now may be wed,
 And I'll make you a capital bridegroom ! "

LXXXVII.

But she looked with disdain, for, that moment, again
 From the thick cloud of dust just emerging,
 Fowle stood forth quite plain 'mid the wounded and slain
 His heroes to energy urging.

LXXXVIII.

“ False Tracy,” he cried, “ from my beautiful bride
 Avert your detestable gazes,
 Descend to my side that the fight may be tried ! ”
 Says Sir Marmaduke, “ Fowle, go to blazes ! ”

LXXXIX.

Quoth he, with a sneer, and a laugh and a jeer,
 “ Go home with your battering ram, Fowle ;
 'Tis perfectly clear I am better up here,
 So I think I shall stay where I am, Fowle ! ”

XC.

He stood, winking his eye, on that battlement high,
 And was turning, poor Ida to wheedle,
 When the maiden, so spry, clapt her hand to his thigh,
 And thrust up to the hilt a sharp needle.

XCI.

With pain did he flush—gave a jump and a rush—
 Lost his balance—strove hard to re-win it,
 When she gave him a push, and with terrible crush
 He was over the cliff in a minute !

XCII.

The sides of the hill he clutched at, until
 He found that he couldn't quite come it,
 So at last had his fill, and, exhausted, lay still,
 Having rolled to the foot from the summit.

XCIII.

And there did he lay, dying fast, in a way
 Which nobody willingly chooses ;
 For the light of the day did his carcase display,
 A mass of incurable bruises.

XCIV.

Fowle's soldiers stood o'er the poor man in his gore,
 Who groaned, " I must go to ' Old Harry ; '
 'Tis a terrible bore ! I shall soon be no more,
 And you, Fowle, the damsel will marry.

XCV.

"Lady Ida," quoth he, " has been too much for me ;
 Her will in rough fashion she teaches.
 One comfort will be, that Fowle, do you see,
 Will find that his dame ' wears the breeches ' !

XCVI.

"I am, I confess, in the deuce of a mess,
 With numbers of sins to repent of :
 There are some you may guess, but a lot more, unless
 I told you, you'd never get scent of.

XCVII.

"I've had wives a full score : aye, I think twenty-four,
 Who at times I'd by fraud or by force court :
 And I own that before I sought after more
 I ought to have tried the Divorce Court !

XCVIII.

"In a dungeon down-stairs you'll find some of the ' fairs : '
 I hadn't the heart to destroy 'em ;
 But, in spite of their prayers, if they gave themselves airs,
 Sent them down, in the dark to enjoy 'em.

XCIX.

“ My soldiers are bold ; they had better be told
 There’s nothing the fight should be won for :
 Their leader, though old, by a girl has been ‘ sold,’
 And is most undeniably ‘ done for ’ ! ”

C.

He raised himself then, and bawled out to his men,
 “ No reason, my hearties, to fight on :
 The crest of the Hen will float over my den—
 Farewell to the Lord of Glenlighton ! ”

CI.

Then he gave a great groan (as the Baron had done
 If they’d tortured and made him a sore nail),
 And his side turning on, exclaimed, “ Crikey ! I’m gone ! ”
 And was instantly “ dead as a door-nail ” !

CII.

What need to relate how they opened the gate,
 And admitted Sir Fowle and his forces ?
 How he entered in state, and showed clemency great,
 All this a mere matter of course is.

CIII.

And how the fair Ida sprang into his arms ;
 How they built up the Montmolon Tower, I
 Dare say you can guess ; and additional charms
 Fowle found in her ladyship’s dowry.

CIV.

Glenlighton they seized ; there was none to dispute :
 And Tracy’s broad lands fared the same, too :
 The place and the country their fancy did suit,
 So they took all the land they laid claim to.

CV.

Nor need it be said that ere long they were wed,
 These lovers, no more to be parted :
 Full soon the tree spread ; and young children were bred ;
 True *Fowles*—who were ne'er *chicken-hearted*.

CVI.

That fort on the rocks (when repaired from the knocks
 Received in Sir Roderick's fighting)
 Made a snug little box, where, like true fighting-cocks,
 They live, at the hour I am writing.

CVIII.

Fowle's deeds are well known—not in *that* land alone,
 But, where'er tales of valour hearts quicken,
 Men exclaim in loud tone to this day, “ We must own
 Such or such man's '*as game as a chicken.*' ”

CVIII.

The Baron lived long ; he was healthy and strong,
 And never ate things one had best shun ;
 So went in “ ding dong ” at the sound of the gong,
 And was blest with a wondrous digestion.

CIX.

Now I've told all I know about Fowle and his foe,
 There's no more that requires explanation :
 On all I'll bestow my blessing, and so
 Conclude, with a bow, my narration.

As soon as the Monarch of the Rhine had finished his poetical legend (to which his companion listened with the most profound attention), he rose from his seat, and

declared that he could really wait no longer, or he should be late for his appointment with those other continental rivers to which he had already alluded. Regret was plainly visible upon the countenance of Father Thames as his Brother Rhine expressed this determination, and he began to endeavour to persuade him to stay a little longer. He of the Rhine, however, seemed to be inexorable, and reminded his entertainer of the good old motto, "Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest," which he declared that he had always held to be an exceedingly wise and proper saying.

Father Thames raised no objection to this, but at the same time observed that he also had several rivers who desired to see him, but that he had postponed their visit in order to do full justice to that of his foreign friend. The Isis and the Cam had indeed sent representatives to wait upon him, as was their annual custom, and enormous crowds of people in steamers, on barges, and on his banks had come out to witness the arrival and triumphant progress of these, which had taken place between Putney and Mortlake, and had as usual created great excitement. But other visitors he had put off, and had still more time to devote to the Rhine Monarch if he could be prevailed upon to stay. This, however, was impossible, and the two friends were about to part when Father Thames casually observed, "I hope all will go well with you, Brother Rhine, until we meet again."

The other heaved a deep sigh. "I hope so, indeed," he replied; "but in these days of progress who can tell what will happen next? Instead of haunted castles I have now Legislative Bodies, which are often possessed by much worse spirits than those which occupied the

old ruins ; instead of giants I have Ministers ; and in the place of river-demons an enlightened Press ; and goodness only knows what may become of me at any moment."

"I, too," responded Father Thames, "have trials which are almost beyond endurance. What with Water Companies, Conservancy Boards, and Embankments, I have of late years been driven nearly wild ; and although they have at some places given up the fine old practice of draining into my waters everything that was foul and abominable, and thus creating a public nuisance in the shape of disagreeable and unwholesome odours, which they afterwards had the impudence to attribute to me, and associate the nuisance with my name, yet I am scurvily treated by mankind in general, and made the unwilling receptacle of dead cats and other unpleasant objects, and have my water taken from me in large quantities, when I would much rather retain it."

"All this is very bad," remarked the Rhine King. "Why not leave such a country and come home with me ?"

"No, thank you," drily returned Father Thames, "not even the blessings which you have enumerated as now in your possession could tempt me to take such a step. I should miss my beef and ale too much."

"Ale !" hastily interrupted his companion. "How you continue to harp upon that beverage of yours, which, after all, cannot compare with that which I drink on mine own river. Come, good brother, before I go let me sing you one of our famous Rhine songs in honour of the immortal wine with which my banks are blessed." And without more ado about the matter, the

Rhine Monarch sang as follows in a rich and full voice:—

I.

“A fig for your sherry or foaming champagne !
 I’d not give a groat for the whole of your stock ;
 Of thirst if I hear my companions complain,
 I hold out my bottle with—‘ Accipe Hoc !
 Accipe Hoc, Accipe Hoc !’
 I hold out my bottle with—‘ Accipe Hoc !’

II.

“At night your port-wine bibber drowsily nods,
 And wakes hot and heavy at crowing of cock ;
 The liquor I offer is fit for the gods,
 And blesses the drinker, so—‘ Accipe Hoc !
 Accipe Hoc, Accipe Hoc !’
 It blesses the drinker, so—‘ Accipe Hoc !’

III.

“Of brandy and whisky I sing not in praise,
 For feet they make stagger and heads they make rock ;
 But the man who is hoping to lengthen his days,
 Should list to my counselling—‘ Accipe Hoc !
 Accipe Hoc,’ &c.

IV.

“Away with your brewing, away with your ale !
 (Though such a proposal your feelings may shock ;)
 For all your malt liquors infallibly pale
 Before my Rhine vintage, so—‘ Accipe Hoc !
 Accipe Hoc,’ &c.

V.

“ ’Tis wine that ne’er robs man of senses or wit,
 But hearts can make lively and tongues can unlock ;
 Makes dull men for once for good company fit,
 And bright ones still brighter, so—‘ Accipe Hoc !
 Accipe Hoc,’ &c.

VI.

“Come, fill up your glasses ! the toast shall be mine,
And loud in applause on the table you’ll knock ;
When I give you ‘The glorious vintage of Rhine !’
And long may each comrade sing, ‘Accipe Hoc !
Accipe Hoc, Accipe Hoc !’
Long may each comrade sing, ‘Accipe Hoc !’”

As the Monarch of the Rhine proceeded, I observed a cloud gathering over the brow of Father Thames, which grew darker when uncomplimentary allusion was made to his favourite ale, and by the time that his guest had concluded his song had deepened into a tremendous and awful frown. Scarcely was the last word out of the singer’s mouth than he burst forth in fury. “Brooks and fountains !” he exclaimed in a loud voice, “is it thus I am to be insulted upon mine own waters ? and am I to sit still and be silent while these insolent foreigners extol their thin and miserable drinks at the expense of the noble beverage upon which Britons have fattened and thriven ever since they were a people ? Off with thee now, then, as soon as thou listest, thou hock-swilling loon, for I cannot put up with such trash !”

The Rhine King had already risen ; but at these words the greatest astonishment was depicted upon his countenance, for he had really meant no offence, so far as I could see, and for my own part I was myself astonished at the conduct of Father Thames in taking notice of such a trifle. He did so, however, and was apparently quite ready to follow up his words with corresponding actions ; for, reaching out his left hand, he raised from beside him a species of instrument somewhat resembling a three-pronged fork, which I had not noticed before, and overset his tumbler with his right hand in the

action. This appeared to exasperate him still more, and as his companion muttered something about the effects of too much ale being to make a man lose his temper, he appeared to get more and more angry, and made as though he would rise. Upon this the Monarch of the Rhine tarried no longer, but made a sudden bolt of it, carrying a couple of curiously shaped spears in his left hand, and leading in his right his attendant eagle,



Father Rhine's Retreat.

tied with a string which was fastened to a collar round its neck. In this undignified manner the Rhine King rushed off the island, and I was so thoroughly ashamed at the rude and inhospitable conduct of my native river that I anxiously started forward to stop the stranger king's flight, to offer apologies, and, if possible, to set matters right between the two. In so doing, however, something struck my hat from my head, and with the shock I awoke, and sat up amazed. There, indeed,

was the dear old river flowing on and on at my feet ; there was the island, and upon it were the reeds and willows as usual, but the River Monarchs were nowhere to be seen. They had passed away like a dream, and no doubt I should be told that all I had seen and heard was only the results of a visit to dreamland during my nap that afternoon.

It was getting dark, and I could only just see the stately shape of Windsor Castle rearing itself above the town in the distance, whilst, to the left, the buildings of my beloved Eton appeared to be shadows fading away in the fast-approaching darkness of night. “ *Absit omen!* ” I exclaimed as I sprang to my feet. “ The glory of Eton shall never fail whilst England is England ; and, least of all, shall the love of her sons for the dear old college ever fade or lessen whilst life endures. I, at least, will be a boy as long as I live in my love for Eton and Eton boys, and to their approval will I submit the legends which I have heard here to-day.”

Filled with these thoughts, I hurried home as fast as I could, and wrote down from memory what I had heard and seen, resolving, if possible, to obtain some further information from the same sources if ever the opportunity should again present itself.

THE END.

278

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